Dimension Publishing Presents

PS Extreme

Volume 1 • Issue 6 • May 1996

THE PLAYER'S UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION

The PlayStation Spring Sports Spectacular!

BASEBALL:
Sony, Accolade and Konami swing for the fences

BASKETBALL:
EA, Sony, Crystal and Acclaim hit the Electric Hardwood

COVER STORY:
The Making of Sony's MLB Pennant Race

EXCLUSIVE:
THE MAKING OF WILLIAMS'...
ROBOTRON X

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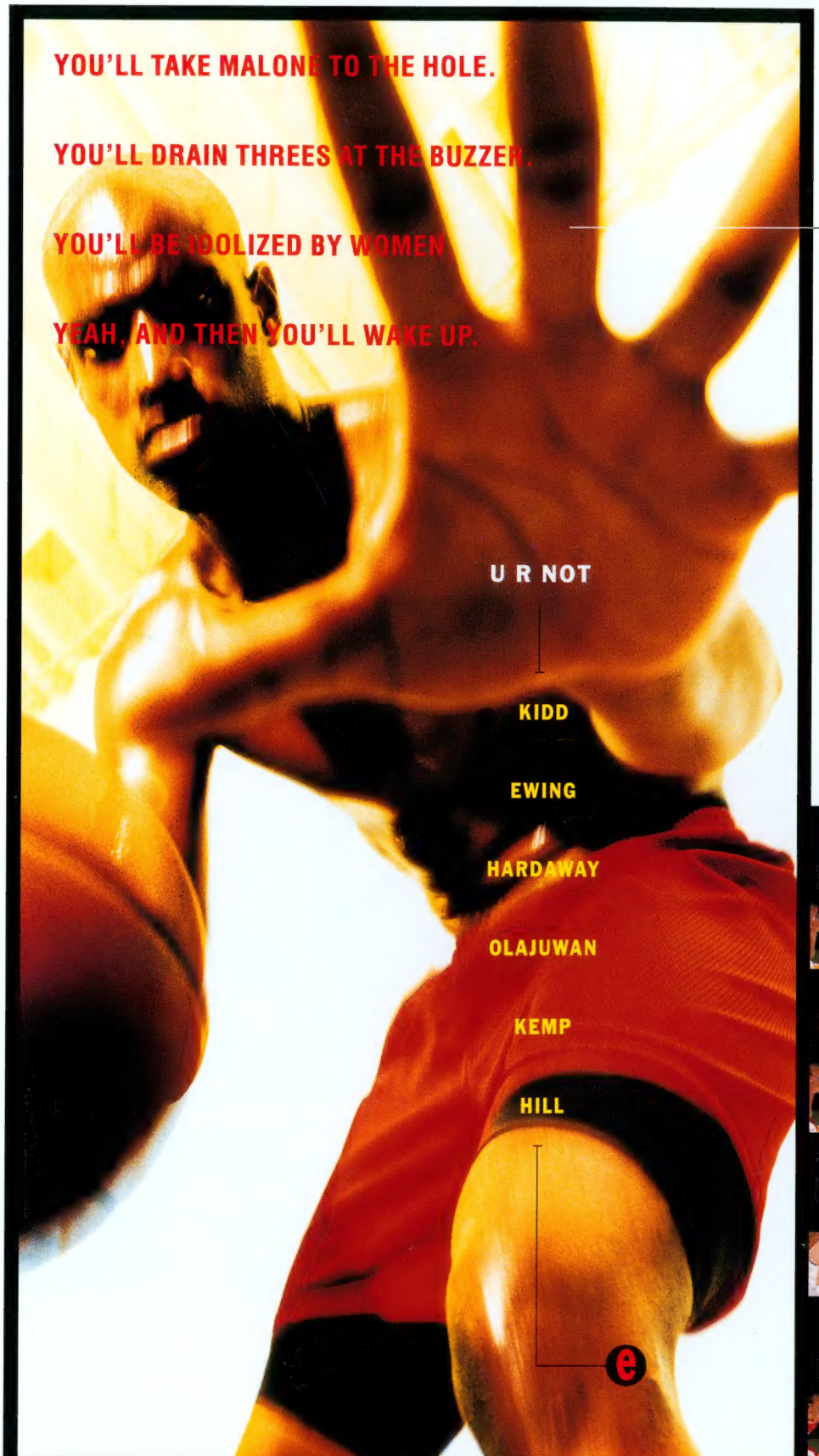
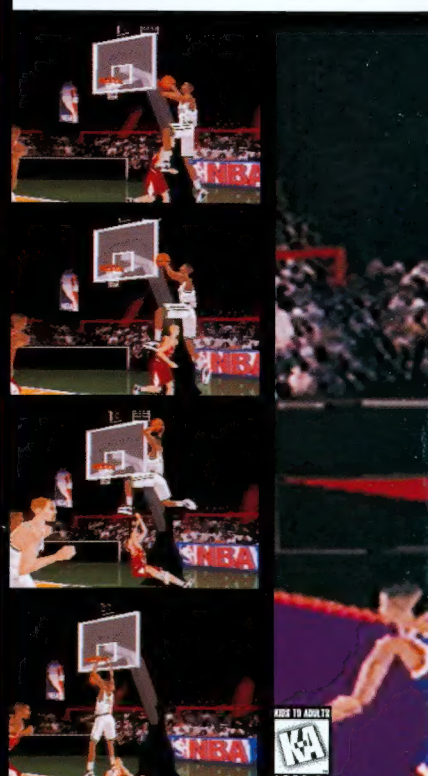


NBA Shoot Out

Okay, rookie. Here's all the 3-D realism, other wannabees–uh, the basketball game



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PlayStation

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"This year the action is better than ever."
Computer Gaming World

"The best baseball sim currently available."
Electronic Entertainment

"★★★★★"
Fusion

"A fine baseball simulation that is sure to please even the most discriminating baseball fan."
Computer Gaming World

The all-time best-selling simulation of baseball! With a new, "closest-to-the-plate" camera view. You're twice as close to the action, with the largest strike zone in the game!

Our complete "stats construction set" instantly puts every stat and rating under the sun at your fingertips. Create unlimited custom stats displays for the ultimate managerial thrill!

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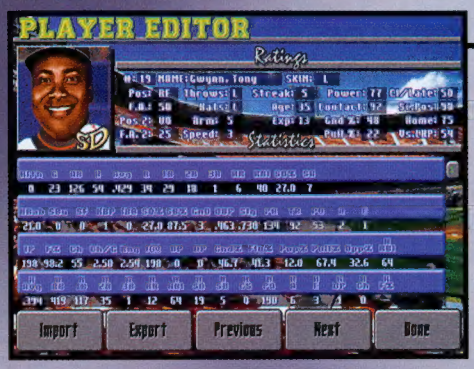
New player animations are smoother and more detailed, letting you aim for the inside corner. "Zoom in" baserunner windows let you make your best pick-off move to the bag.

Watch your best reliever warming up in the bullpen, and analyze your starter's fatigue, pitch count, and performance. When he's ready to go, you're ready to go!



Create your own players from scratch, or modify any player's ratings, or even their physical attributes! The resulting player will be true-to-life, on-field and off.

Experience the best of baseball history with the bonus "Legends" League—12 great legendary teams from history, come to life in 12 beautifully rendered old-time stadiums.

Optional wide-angle pitcher and batter views recreate the traditional look of a broadcast baseball game in beautiful 256-color SVGA graphics!

For maximum variety in gameplay, change any manager's tendencies on any team and see the results play out on the field and in the stats.

Hot new user interface gives you instant access to any feature. View and manage your team from the field, from the dugout, and from the General Manager's office!

This "fifth generation" fielding simulation has additional play animations, baseball plays, and graphics realism, resulting in true-life baseball gameplay.

It's all here: pick-off plays, hit-and-run, suicide squeeze, towering pop-ups, and more. The ultimate simulation of baseball, for everyone who loves the game!

PlayStation™
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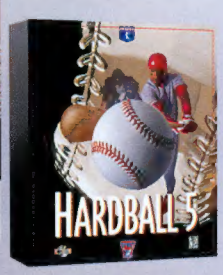

See for yourself!
For demo;
http://www.MindSpan.com/MindSpan/hb5.html

PC CD-ROM

ACCOLADE

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VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 6
MAY, 1996

IN THE EXTREME

EXNEWS: Page 14
Shameless plugs, chats with Capcom and big RPG info, all this month.

EXCLUSIVE: Page 18
Big fun with Player 1. It's the making of Robotron X for the PSX!

EXECUTE: Page 20
The mother (well, maybe REALLY great looking sister) of all codes in Agile Warrior + codes for Alien Trilogy, PO'ed, Descent and more.

EXPECTING: Page 22
All sorts of new games previewed this month including Time Commando, Shredfest, Deadly Skies, Top Gun, X-Men, F1 Racing and more.

EXTREME: Page 30
This month, we feature Sony's amazing MLB Pennant Race.

EXRATED: Page 34
Sports, sports and more sports! Twelve games reviewed this month including Hardball 5, NBA Shootout, NBA Live '96, College Slam, NFL QB Club '96 and Striker!

EXCAVATE: Page 60
Check out the latest scores! What games did you miss that we say you got to git? Go mining for Gold!

SO, DAVE...

EDITORIAL

TELL US WHAT YOU REALLY THINK

I have wanted to publish a magazine like this since I first started in this business four years ago. As many of you know, I live for a good sports game. And life has been very good since the release of the PlayStation. We already have GameDay, NHL Face Off, PGA 96, In the Zone and FIFA and we are about to get a heck of a lot more!

This issue, the Spring Sports Spectacular, as we are calling it, is a coming out party for PS sports product in 1996. (Never before has electronic sports gaming moved this close to reality.) In this single issue, we feature new baseball and basketball games from the industry's most renowned sports publishers. I have taken the editorial responsibility for this feature personally and have had a great time doing it. Can you imagine a job where your single biggest issue is determining which is better, NBA Shootout or NBA Live 96? Or, is MLB Pennant Race a superior effort to Bottom of the Ninth? What can I say ... it's a living!

And, speaking of Bottom of the Ninth and responsibility, I need to answer to an error made on my part in our last issue. We mistakenly reviewed a 50% finished version of Konami's baseball game and we were not particularly kind to the product (we even compared it to Super Bases Loaded, possibly the worst baseball game of all time ... yikes!). This error was brought to our attention; the final, reviewable version of the game came across my desk and the new review appears in this issue. We offer our apologies to all of our readers and to Konami for this error. Ultimately, this responsibility is mine and I fumbled the ball. Although, it's not like my life has been made miserable because of this faux paus. I was able to have extended time with Bottom of the Ninth and, as you will see in our evaluation, it is a pretty cool product!

In closing, I hope all of you sports fans out there enjoy this issue. In a gaming world where sports software accounts for as much as 30% of all game software sold in the US and where a sports game enthusiast can't beg, borrow or steal decent information from the various publications covering this industry, we are very proud of this issue and hope it will be the first of many.

Dave

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PS Extreme

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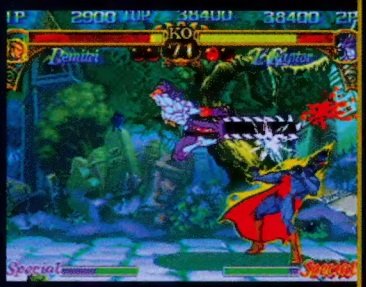

HISTORY'S MOST FEARED MONSTERS AND MUTANTS ARE BOLTING FROM THE ARCADE IN SEARCH OF A DARK ARENA FOR THEIR NEXT MIDNIGHT FIGHT FOR SUPREMACY. VICTOR'S COMING OVER WITH HIS SHOCKING THUNDERSTRIKE. FELICIA'S TRACKING IN PLENTY OF DIRT FOR HER LITTERBOX KICK. BISHAMON IS SWINGING BY HIS RAZOR-SLASHING DIVIDER. ALL THE EVIL POWERS AND DEVASTATING MOVES OF THE TEN DARKSTALKERS YOU'VE COME TO FEAR ARE HEADED YOUR WAY. ALONG WITH HIDDEN SPECIAL MOVES, MID-AIR BLOCKS AND SUPER FATAL BLOWS TO MAKE YOUR PLAYSTATION™ SMOKE. SO LEAVE A LIGHT ON FOR THE DARKSTALKERS. AND TAKE DOWN YOUR DAD'S BOWLING TROPHIES. RAPTOR'S FLYING SAW BLADE HAS BEEN SLICING A LITTLE WILD LATELY.

DARKSTALKERS™

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DARKSTALKERS™
WELCOME HOME.

Mission Briefing: Problem reported at Bio-Weapons Research facility in Raccoon Hills. No communication with Science Staff in six weeks. No response

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Your team should not be misled by the neat and orderly appearance of this isolated mansion. A major corporation's been conducting questionable research here. You'll soon discover the results of some very, very careless experiments.

Lose hyper-realistic 3D lighting and an ominous CD quality sound-track and special effects, to unique action perspectives, this intense drama unfolds, building terror and suspense with every new room you wander through.

Fight or flight! When you're under-powered and on the run, split-second decision making abilities are key. Discover and arm yourself with anything you find: knives, pistols, shotguns, flame-throwers and more.

This twisted 32-bit polygon-based blood-bath isn't limited to gleaming dining rooms and endless polished hallways. Answers are found in darkest corners of the estate cemetery, crumbling guest houses, and a mysterious tower.

from initial reconnaissance team. No backup. You are on your own. CAPCOM

RESIDENT EVIL™

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Dear PSExtreme,

I am new to console systems and I just love your magazine. I circle the release date on my calendar every month. I've been a C64 & PC gamer for the last 7 years. The upgrading was just too expensive so my wife bought me my PlayStation for Xmas I already have 9 games. Yes I love them all.
My question is: where can I find this so called RGB cable for connection of a PSX with a PC monitor? Have you seen it or heard of it?

NFCCowboys
via America Online

There are very, very few monitors that an RGB cable will work with. The cable is made mainly for the European and Japanese markets where they have televisions with an interface called SCART. To work on an American monitor, the monitor must sync to a 15 Hz signal, which only a few do, such as the old Amiga 1084. Even then, you'll need to solder some new 'lectrics onto the end of the stock RGB cable. Normal VGA or RGB computer monitors won't work, even if they're multi-sync. However, if you do manage to find a suitable monitor, prepare to behold the best picture quality you've ever seen from a video game.

Dear PSExtreme:

Since the very first issue, I have been extremely pleased with the ratings that the games have been getting in your magazine. But, what I'm really writing to tell you about is the choice that Greg Off made on how to rate Road Rash. It was a smart decision, in my opinion, because there are plenty of people out there who have never played the 3DO version before. If you assume that everyone has, then it is a completely useless review to everyone who hasn't, which is probably the majority of people. Ratings should ALWAYS be based on the games themselves, not on if they are on another system or not. That's how your rating system seems to work, so I commend you for that.

Sincerely,
Brian Calitri,
Webster NY

Dear PSExtreme,

PSExtreme is the best mag available! I am writing about two things: First, I want to tell fellow PS owners that Road Rash is great! Don't listen to the reviews in all the other magazines. The graphics are great, the bikes handle better than any other PS racing game, the action is intense, there are five tracks and five levels - each adding new streets to the previous five tracks, when you're going 180mph, the game makes you believe it, and when you run into a car in the middle of an intersection and go flying over the car, you can't help but laugh. Besides, what other game lets you kick a cop off his motorcycle when he's trying to pull you over? The second thing is, why is Sony and Psygnosis making games for Sega Saturn (Battle Arena Toshinden / Wipeout)? If they plan on making all their games for the Saturn, I will be very upset. I could have just bought a Saturn instead and got all the Sega and Sony games on one system. You better believe the rest of the people who have not bought a system yet will make the same decision. I've already sent a letter to Sony through: http://www.sony.com, and suggest all other PS owners do the same. I really hope you can find out what's going on and let me and everyone else know why Sony is doing this.

Keith
Chicago, IL

Don't worry Keith, Sony doesn't want to lose sales to the Saturn. They won't release games on the Saturn until well after the hype and excitement over the PlayStation version is gone.

Dear PSExtreme,

Last week I purchased a PlayStation (with Doom) and couldn't be happier. I've got a few questions and thought you would be the right guys for the job. First off, is it safe to leave the built-in CD audio player on for extended periods of time? I'm afraid it'll burn that image onto my TV (I'm only paranoid because I bought my TV two months ago.) Well, really I just had one question, the rest just comments. Last month I went to the newsstand to buy your mag and accidentally bought another that goes by the initials P.S.X. It took me a while to figure out it wasn't yours, but in that time, I was extremely pissed. For a week or two I sat in the corner, naked, clutching myself, muttering, "The verdict: No Dimension = utter unhappiness." So the moral of the story is, that PS Extreme is bigger than Jesus and the Dark Satanic Underworld is to stuff hamsters with peat moss. Keep up the good work.

Tom Hartshorn,
Salix, PA

As long as you bought a late model television, you can leave a still image on your TV for as long as you want. The burn-in you're talking about only happens on older televisions. Unless, of course, you bought a projection TV, that's a different story. The views of our readers do not necessarily reflect the views of Dimension Publishing. Dimension Publishing does not condone hamster stuffing or any other form of cruelty to small beings.

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Dear PSExtreme,

I am writing in regard to the review of "NBA In The Zone" in your Feb/March 1996 issue. I realize you guys have a lot of games to sort through but please, spend a little time with the game before you sell it short. While it is true, the game's lack of complete and up-to-date rosters is a disappointment, no Jordan? no Shaq?, and the programmer's lack of basketball knowledge (the announcer is WAY OFF on some of the names) is obvious, but its gameplay and graphics are pure gravy. First step, set the game level to professional. Now those easy dunks aren't so easy anymore ... outside shooting, "absolutely unnecessary"? ... think again. When's the last time you saw someone slam dunk a three pointer? Can't run down a guy from behind or from the side and block his shot? ... keep trying. IT CAN BE DONE. If you want that loose ball before your opponent, hit the steal button, it doubles as a slight speed burst. Tired of having the ball stuffed in your face as you go up for the jam? A touch on the "triangle" button in mid-flight will send your player into a sweet reverse. When a teammate is close to and facing the basket, hit the pass and shoot buttons simultaneously for a rockin' alley-oop ... this one's difficult, but IT CAN BE DONE. Ah-hah! There's more to this game than meets the eye. Things aren't always so easy in difficult mode. It makes the game challenging, and challenging games are the ones that grab you. NBA in The Zone is one of those games, and two player mode is even more addicting. Add the awesome graphics and you've got a solid 96% on your hands.

J.S.
Manalapan, NJ

PS: Great magazine, keep up the good work and please don't change the format.

While we understand your enthusiasm for In The Zone, as an arcade game, we stand by our initial evaluation. When Eric reviewed the title, he did so at every difficulty level. Dave also played the game and found that it wasn't substantially different at Level 5. We believe that our review is consistent and that the game, while graphically beautiful, really doesn't deserve an "A" rating (from a gameplay standpoint). Now that we have reviewed the latest batch of hoop titles from Sony, EA Sports and Crystal Dynamics, we are convinced that this was the right score.

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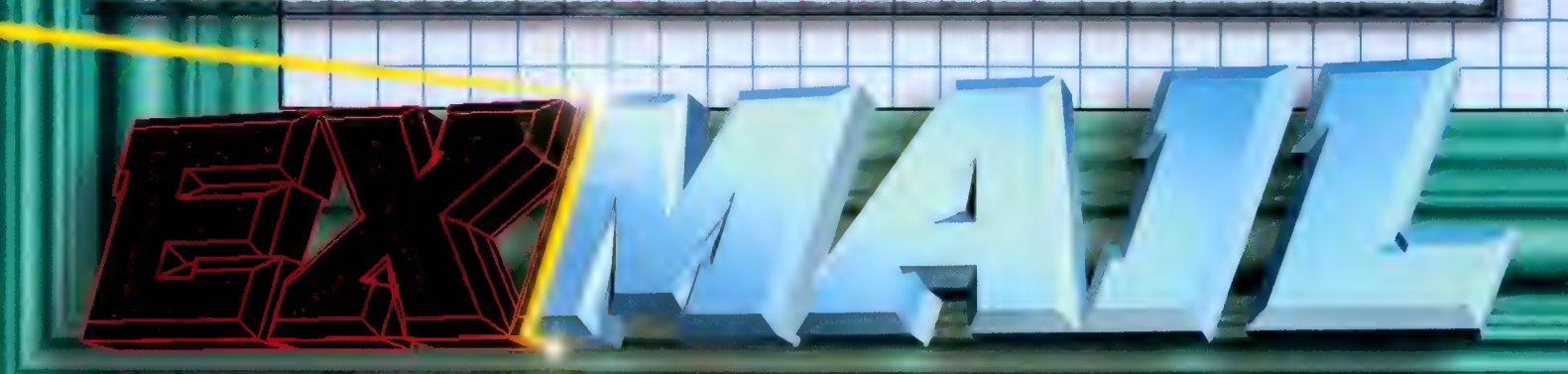

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In Return Fire, firepower is key, but strategy is what keeps you alive. From helicopters that make Apaches look like Pocahontas, to tanks straight out of your worst nightmares, your mission is to disable enemy forces, blow your way into hostile territory and retrieve the flag with a ground-pounding jeep. But this is no one-sided kill-fest. Your enemy is in your face trying to do the same thing to you.

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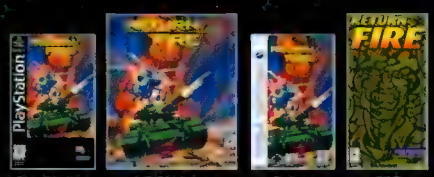

PlayStation PC CD-Rom Saturn 3DO

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

Created and Designed by Baron R.K. Von Wolfsheild • Developed by Silent Software, Inc. • Co-Produced by Prolific Publishing, Inc.

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PlayStation Gaming News
From Around The Globe

Compiled by Zach Meston

ABC AND SPECTRUM GO INTO OVER TIME

Hey, sports fans! Heard of Over Time Sports? Didn't think so. This new sports game publisher is a joint venture between ABC, Inc. and industry veteran Spectrum Holobyte. Established in late '95, Over Time Sports' first title will be, appropriately, "ABC's Monday Night Football", available this fall for PlayStation and PC/CD-ROM.

"We've designed this game to bring home all of the fun, excitement and pageantry of Monday Night Football...," said Doug Rebert, Director of Marketing for Over Time. "We are excited that ABC Sports is taking a very active role in creating this game and ensuring that this title replicates Monday Night Football right down to the on-air graphics and music."

Toward that end, the development team is making use of advanced animation techniques, such as motion-capture and polygonal characters. The game will also feature the voices and images of Al, Frank and Dan - to help heighten the sense of realism. (If they bring Howard back from his dirt nap to do the half-time show, I'm gonna be all over this one!)

CHATTIN' WITH CAPCOM

Of all the P.R. folks I deal with, Capcom Entertainment's Melinda Mongelluzzo is easily one of the nicest. She's always forthcoming with information and sending out cool promotional goodies, like those Street Fighter Alpha keychains which I swear had nothing to do with my 95% rating. Plus, she's a babe. So I decided to give her a ringy-ding to inquire about Capcom-related news bits.

Item #1: The cancellation of AD&D Tower of Doom, a conversion of the popular Golden Axe-ish side-scrolling coin-op. Whasup wit dat, Melinda? "It came down to development problems and business decisions. The game was scheduled to ship in March 1996, but wasn't going to make that date, so we had to decide whether to hire another developer or cancel the project and focus on our other games. A lot of people are disappointed, and we're disappointed too." But with a killer PlayStation lineup for '96, including the guaranteed megahit Resident Evil, it probably wasn't a tough call. Hey, we can still hope for a conversion of Tower of Doom 2.

Item #2: The hideous artwork on the Street Fighter Alpha box. Whasup with dat, Melinda? "We made a mistake. We'd seen the Japanese artwork used all over various magazines, so we commissioned a well-known design firm to create new art for the cover. The upside is, that it's such a great game that the box seems to be the only complaint about the product. Where it really counts, the game delivers. In the future, we'll be using the Japanese artwork whenever possible."

Unfortunately, according to this editor, this doesn't apply to Resident Evil, which also has a terrible cover. But as Melinda points out, "Street Fighter Alpha was the #1 game the week it was released, so you have to wonder how important the artwork is." Hmmm.

Item #3: The long loading time of SF Alpha on the PlayStation when compared to the Saturn. Say it with me, everyone: Whasup with dat, Melinda? She passes me along to several Capcom techno-weenies who explain that the slowness involves the PlayStation's relatively small video RAM, or some such techno-thing. One weenie even timed the loading for Capcom and reported that the PS took about nine seconds to load up a match, versus five seconds on the Saturn---probably the only thing Saturn owners can brag about these days. (Always good to end a news item with an immature Saturn-bashing comment.)

SHAMELESS PLUG DEPT.

Yes, I'm a publicity ho', and yes, I'm taking unfair advantage of my status as PS*Extreme* news boy, but I gotta pay the rent, people. Hence, this shameless plug for the PlayStation Player's Guide, a lovely strategy guide recently written by myself and some New Yawker named John Ricciardi. (John has ties with the Mafia, which really helped in getting games for the book.) The PlayStation Player's Guide is stuffed with over two dozen chapters teeming with hints, tips, maps, and walkthroughs. Among the featured games are: Battle Arena Toshinden, DarkStalkers, Loaded, Mortal Kombat 3, Tekken, WipeOut, and tons more. There's also a section of cheats for games not covered with a full chapter — kinda like this very magazine's X-Ecute section. At a whopping 350 pages, this

The bitch is on PlayStation...

and she doesn't feel like playing!

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book isn't just a great read, it's hefty enough to cause serious injury if you hit someone with it. The price is $16.95, and all profits are donated to the Zach Meston Pay-The-Rent Fund. Look for the PlayStation Player's Guide at your friendly neighborhood software store, or call Sandwich Islands Publishing at (808) 661-8195. Now back to the real news....

ROLE-PLAYERS REJOICE

After six long months and a whopping one title (King's Field) available for PlayStation-owning RPG freaks, Sony and SquareSoft have heard our pathetic cries for more bloody games and plan to ease our pain with several RPGs this year.

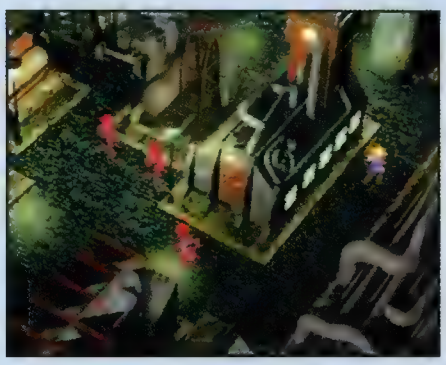
In one of those newfangled things called a "press release," Sony announced the impending U.S. release of two popular Japanese RPGs. Beyond the Beyond, due to ship in June, will be Sony's first RPG product in the U.S. The niftiest features of the game are its 3D battle scenes, non-linear storyline and overhead maps built with texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded polygons — in plain English, they're real purty.

Later in '96, we'll be graced with Arc the Lad, which has sold over 400,000 copies in Japan. This fine entertainment product sports over 60 monsters, 63 "accessories" (items) and 50 spells, along with two soundtracks performed by the London Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. (The word from folks who've played the Japanese version is that it's wonderful, but far too short. Bummer!)

The SquareSoft announcement is an even bigger deal: Final Fantasy VII, which was originally planned as a Nintendo 64 cartridge, is now destined to be a two-CD PlayStation extravaganza. SquareSoft and Nintendo have indeed parted ways entirely; whether this is due to Nintendo's notorious business practices, or SquareSoft's frustration at being unable to stuff games into the Nintendo 64's puny cartridges, is uncertain. (SquareSoft's U.S. office was disturbingly clueless about the whole matter when we called them for comment.)

This is a major score for the PlayStation, since SquareSoft's RPGs for the Super NES have been consistently big sellers in the States, snapped up by a cult of devotees who buy anything the company churns out. Now those cultists will be buying PlayStations instead of Ultra 64s.

Our hard-working World Wide Web research squad (which would be me, the geek with no life) located SquareSoft's Japanese Web site at http://square.co.jp, with several English-language pages about FF VII. Some amusing excerpts:



"An awesome production by using the PlayStation!! Large data in CD-ROMs allowing the expression of a game that appeals to the emotions of the users!"

"Rotation, reduction, and change of viewpoints with great ease! Cities and dungeons shown all in 3D!"

"Characters and enemies are constructed out of polygons which allows you to experience battles from different points of view. This realism makes us feel as if we were actually there. Added to actions in battles, you'll see subtle expressions of the characters never seen before."

3D SWORDPLAY

American Laser Games is almost notorious when it comes to games that feature nothing but semi-interactive Full Motion Video. So, it might come as a shock to learn that they have (thankfully) chosen a new direction to embark upon and are focusing their talents into producing nothing but high-end 3D multimedia products. "Shining Sword", the first fruit of their labors, will be a brand-new 32bit fighting/exploration game unlike anything now available. Promising to take full advantage of the PlayStation's powerful graphics capabilities, Shining Sword will offer "jaw-dropping" special effects and fluid three-dimensional texture-mapped graphics. The in-house development team working on the project is pioneering several animation techniques which include: a revolutionary animated particle system, like those seen on high-end workstations, which will create special effects such as waterfalls, streams of flame and magical spells, 3D animated characters in a 3D world, and object spawning and animation, which enables special effects such as collapsing buildings and chopping off body parts in battle. We will have tons of screen-shots and plenty more on the actual storyline and gameplay elements in next month's "Expecting".

ONLINE WITHOUT REX

That sure didn't last long. Rex got a job as a game tester for a company that won't let him write any videogame related editorial. It was fun while it lasted!

EX NEWS

GET THE RUSH OF YOUR LIFE IN THE

AGILE WARRIOR F-111X

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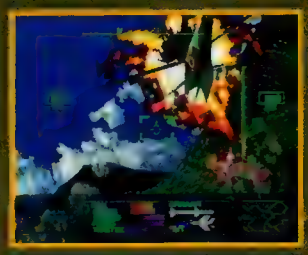
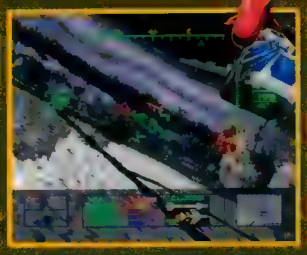
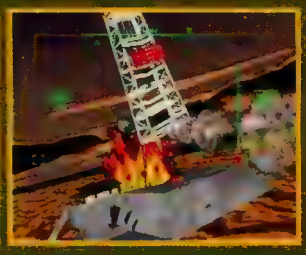
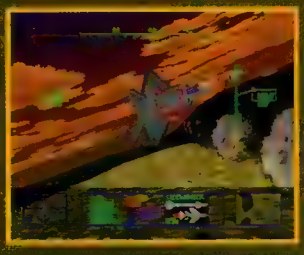








VIRGIN INTERACTIVE COMPLETE AGILE WARRIOR "RIDE OF YOUR LIFE" SWEEPSTAKES RULES

Virgin Interactive Entertainment

INTERACTIVE entertainment

The making of

Robotron X

Left to right: Tom, Tak, George, Ian and Jason

PS*Extreme* recently had the pleasure of speaking with George Weising, the Creative Director at Player1. Player1 is the group of five young lads who are responsible for creating the next big incarnation of Williams Entertainment's all-time classic arcade game, Robotron. Williams will be releasing the PlayStation version in time for Christmas, 1996. Williams was kind enough to let us take at peek at the game and talk to the developer to see how well things are going.

PSEX: So how do you make a good game?

George: Well, Player 1 has a few ideas about that. What ever happened to Stryder or Ghouls & Ghosts? Although 3D games are popping up everywhere, there has been so much experimentation that people have forgotten some of the videogame basics. 'Easy to learn difficult to master' is a good example. We're creating the kind of games that seem to have slipped through the cracks during the game industry's mad rush into 3D: mainly the 3D action platform game. Player1 is currently developing Robotron X as completely 3 dimensional treatment of William's classic arcade hit.

PSEX: So who are you guys anyway?

George: Well we all have pretty interesting backgrounds. Ian Morrison, our President, has been making games for a long time. He ran ICE Games in the UK, and programmed many games for the 8 bit ZX Spectrum; Beach Head was his first number one game in 1984. For the Amiga, he made Outrun, Chase HQ and Hydra. Jason came straight from Core Design. He designed and created all of the artwork for Thunder Strike, Jaguar XJ220 and Battle Core. He's a real Pixels and Polygon's man! Tom Ketola has a great track record for a whiz-kid 19 year old. He has worked at Activision, Sony and now Player1! Takashi Kurosaki, our 3D programming specialist, began his career in 3D graphics over 20 years ago in the aerospace industry writing military simulators. He thinks game systems still have to improve to be as good as the toys the military has. I have been playing games since I was 12 years old. I helped start a game magazine to be able to play more games. I became so interested in the process of creating games that I left and took a job at Sony. This was like design boot camp.

PSEX: So what are you shooting for with Robotron X?

George: We are making painstaking effort to capture the magic of the original, while injecting a surreal sense of reality to the whole chaotic scene. In Robotron X, gameplay is the most important feature. It does have great graphics, cool bosses, lots of bullets and a frantic pace that very few games ever capture.

PSEX: How did you end up doing Robotron?

George: Well, Player1 was formed through a genuine passion for videogames. We all feel that most games pay too much attention to their artwork and not enough to gameplay. We wanted to do a 3D game that uses the Robotron control scheme. We originally designed a 3rd person, 3D action platform game that would allow the player to walk in one direction and fire in any other, simultaneously. After several months of pitching the game design to potential publishers, an agent got us through the front door of William's Entertainment! Now being a game addict, this was a little like entering the Emerald City. We made our pitch, and left in awe.

After several days, we got a call from Williams, saying that they would like to have another meeting. During the course of that meeting, the topic turned to Robotron, and how amazingly fun it still is. When the question was asked: "do you think that Robotron would be fun in 3D?" we all went nuts! We whisked off to do a game proposal. 2 weeks later we were back at Williams with a Videotape of Robotron in 3D!

PSEX: How did you prove that you could

EXCLUSIVE

do a game like Robotron in 3D and with so many characters? Weren't you afraid that it would be difficult to tell what's going on?

George: Well when we were definitely concerned about that. In the original game it's important to see the whole area so that you can tell when a Human is being programmed by a Brain or when a Spheroid ejects a Quark. So we set out to prove it. Jason Gee, our Art Director, uses Wavefront software on an SGI to generate all of the game models and kinemation. We videotaped level 1 from the original Robotron: 2084 and Jason created an Arena, a Grunt and some Electrodes. He then kinemated the whole level being played in 3D exactly like it was played on tape. We then came up with some rules for the camera, applied them to the animation and played it back to see the results. This process proved that it would be fun and look great too.

PSEX: With that many characters, how are you going to keep that game fast?

George: Speed is our primary concern. The first thing we did is build low polygon characters. We then figured out how many polygons would be needed to do, say a hundred Grunts. We came up with a ton of technical solutions like: zooming the camera in when there are too many characters on the screen or drifting to a top view to reduce the number of polygons that the PlayStation must draw. Gameplay is the most important thing and speed is key to maintaining the feel of the original.

PSEX: How much time have you spent on the version we're looking at here?

George: About 2.5 months.

PSEX: Wow, it really looks great for such an early game. What do you think of programming the Playstation?

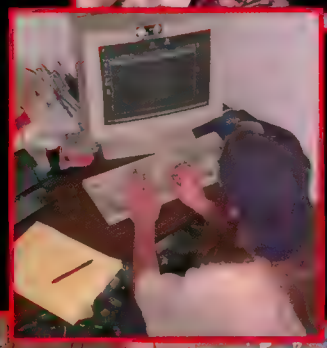
George: Technically it's amazing! It's what I was dreaming about when I was 15. It is providing developers with truly NEW types of tools. Sony is really encouraging developers to be innovative and make games that are fun.

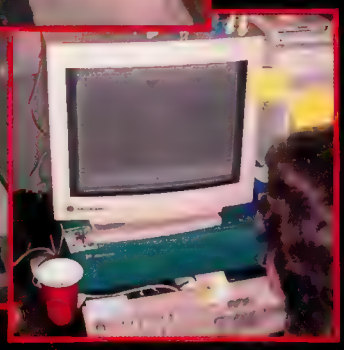
For some reason that I can't explain, games are getting more and more complex. It's almost like a competition to see who can offer more camera controls and menu settings. Although lots of options are important, the emphasis should be more on the game itself. After all, isn't the main purpose of 3D to bring a universe alive with as much flash and personality as possible? We want to make games that have great endings, lots of unique play mechanics, incredible bosses, REALLY BAD bad guys and push the machine to the edge of what it can do.

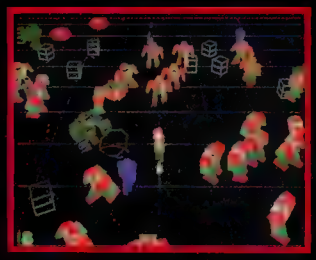
PSEX: Isn't that what everyone wants to do with the Playstation?

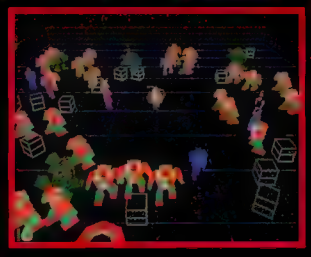
George: In a perfect world, yes. It just seems that my consumer experience over the last few years has been like shooting fish in a barrel. We want to SEE the main character and really bring it to life with lots of 3D animation. We expect to put blisters on gamer thumbs everywhere christmas '96.

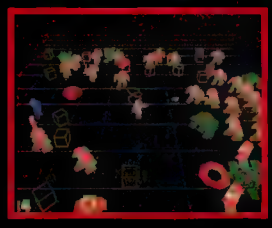
PSEX: George, we want to thank you and everyone at Player1 for taking the time to talk to us and show us this awesome game.



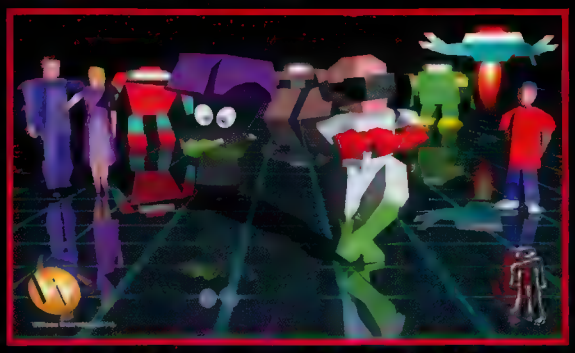


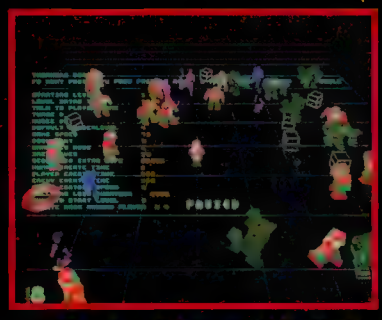






The "Tweak" Menu in Action

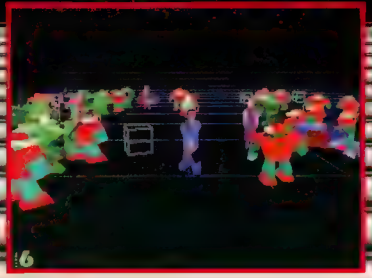


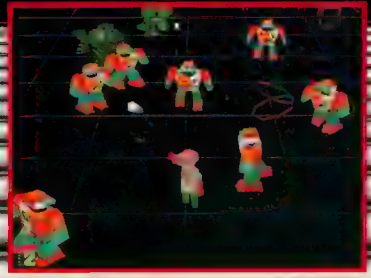


Wireframe Mode

Flat-Shaded Mode

Texture Mapped Mode





SEND US YOUR CODES AND WIN BIG!

Each month we'll pick the best code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a brand spankin' new copy of ASCII's hot new RPG for the PlayStation, **King's Field**. But wait! That's not all: if you act now, we'll also include ASCII's super stylish **Turbo Control Pad** for the PlayStation for your controlling pleasure, PLUS **twelve (12) free issues** of the best, the only, monthly dedicated PlayStation magazine, **PSExtreme**, of course! Wow, that's a lot of cool stuff for just a code; what are you waiting for?

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Congratulations and thanks go to this month's winner, **Will Botti of Santa Monica, CA**. Just take a look at this picture and you'll know why Will gets the goodies!

Agile Warrior

THE DANCE!: Pause the game and press ←, □, □, □, □, ↑, △, △, △, →, ○, ↓, ×, ↓, ×, ↓, ×, ↓, ×, ↓, ×, ↓, ×.

Now, when you finish your mission, you'll get to feast your eyes on the hottest video game babe you've ever had connected to your controller.

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or ASCII Entertainment, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant.

Alien Trilogy

LEVEL SELECT: Go to the OPTIONS menu and choose ENTER PASSWORD. Now enter the password GOLVLX, replacing X with the number of the level you'd like to play. (There are 34 in all, and you don't need to enter a "0" for levels 1 to 9.) The messages CHEATS ACTIVATED appears in red to confirm what an evil person you are. Exit back to the main menu and choose START GAME to begin on the level you chose.

Bases Loaded '96

COMPUTER MANAGER: Pause the game and press △, □, ×, ○, ○, L2 on Controller 2. The PlayStation takes your your team. Enter the code again to retake control.

HOME RUNS: Pause the game and press △, □, ×, ○, ○, ○, L1 on Controller 2. Every time your batter hits the ball, it's a home run, whether he's swinging away or bunting. Enter the code again to disable the easy homers.

INNING SKIP: Pause the game and press △, □, ×, ○, ○, ○, × on Controller 2. Press × on Controller 2 to change the inning and START to jump to that inning. If the game is tied, you can go up to the 18th inning.

D

TIME LIMIT: You can't die in D, but you're on a time limit; if the clock runs out before you finish the game, it's back to the beginning. (You also get to see one of the game's three endings.) Don't take too long to move around or make decisions.

GLOWING BUGS: The most unusual aspect of D is—and I swear I'm not making this up—the four glowing bugs hidden away in various locations. When you stumble upon a bug, you watch a kooky flashback sequence from Laura's childhood. Each bug reveals a more explicit flashback than the last. The catch is that the bugs don't appear in the same locations from game to game, and sometimes don't appear at all. Here's where we've found each of the four bugs (these locations are also mentioned in the walkthroughs of each disk below):

- The first bug is either next to the front door or in the chest of drawers.
- The second bug is either between the marble busts or on the bookshelf.
- The third bug is either in the garden fountain or underneath the first door in the room with the crank.
- The fourth bug is always at the end of the dark hallway at the top of the castle.

DISC 1 WALKTHROUGH: Turn around and examine the front door. Walk forward to the fireplace after looking at the bowl of "water" on the dining table. Go through the left doorway and walk up the stairs. Turn and open the door to the left for a gross-out, then turn right and open the door into the bedroom. Examine the chest of drawers and press ○ to activate a highlight. Press ○ again to open the top drawer (I) and retrieve the sheet of paper. Examine the fireplace to find a key. Return to the dining hall. Use the sheet of paper in the bowl to reveal a hidden message. Return to the chest of drawers and open the IV drawer, then the II drawer. Inside II is a valve-turning device.

Walk down the stairs, turn left, and enter the keg room. Try to walk to the passageway in the brick wall. Examine the keg and use the valve-turner on it. Walk to the passageway again and down the stairs to a locked door marked with the number 78. Return to the dining hall (examine the mirror near the stairs for a scare) and use the key on the locked door to the right of the fireplace. Inside the room is a corpse with its arm stuck in the wall. Go into the room to the left (with the bed) and examine the wooden box. Press ○ to grasp the lever, then ○ again to start the first of the two numbers spinning. The object is to stop the numbers on 78, but it's not quite that easy. While the first number stays the same, the second number adds the first number to itself. Set the first number to 7 and the second number to 1 (which rolls to 8) to open the box. Inside is the hand of the corpse, with a shiny ring on its finger. Go back to the 78 door and use the ring to unlock it.

DISC 2 WALKTHROUGH: Examine the picture of the smiling girl on the far wall. Press ○ and it morphs into a pattern of pictures. Examine the cabinet on the left side of the room, near the bed. Spin the wheel until it matches the pattern on the picture. (If you forgot the pattern, spin the wheel three times so that the deer is on the bottom.) Open the door next to the cabinet.

Enter the room and examine the busts and the bookshelf to find the second glowing bug. Leave the bust room through the next door into a small antechamber filled with bodies. Search the corpses to find a golden key.

Return to the room with the picture of the girl and use the key to unlock the desk drawer on the right side of the room. Inside is a book. Return to the bust room and examine the bookshelf after another visit

from Richter's increasingly annoying ("Laura! Laura!") floating head. Use the book in the empty space to reveal a hidden stairway into a room with a large crank at one end. You turn the crank to reveal new doors in the wall behind you. You start at Door 1 (Bars). It's three turns to Door 2 (Chest), two more turns to Door 3 (Garden), one more turn to Door 4 (Glass), four more turns to Door 5 (Armor), and two more turns back to Door 1. When you first enter the room, turn the crank once and walk to the blocked door, then walk back to the crank to get a visit from Richter. Door 1 shows the stairs that led into this room, now sealed off by iron bars. Door 2 leads down a flight of stairs into a room with a chest protected by a bed of spikes. Door 3 leads up a flight of stairs into a garden. Door 4 leads into a room with a stained-glass window. (Press ○ to pound on it.) Door 5 leads into a room with suits of armor lined up against the walls, and a pit at the far end. Go through each door and explore everything; in particular, walk around the garden and examine the fountain. (Don't mess around with the statue buttons.) The third glowing bug is sometimes on the edge of it. If you don't explore behind the doors in order, you might not find the third bug at all.

When you enter Door 5 and walk to the pit at the end of the room, you're attacked by a suit of armor. When the left-facing arrow appears on the screen, press Left (duh), then press Right when the right-facing arrow appears. Laura nearly falls into the pit, but manages to climb back out. Press Left on the pad when prompted, then quickly press ○ when prompted to shove the armor into the pit. You automatically take the sword. If you screw up any of these moves, climb the ladder and try the sequence again until you get it right.

If you didn't find the third glowing bug at the fountain, use the crank to go to Door 1. Open the door and examine it to find the bug. Return to the Garden (Door 3) and walk to the door in the wall. Use the sword to unlock it. Walk through the door and up the stairs to find a telescope and a lever. By switching the lever, you can look at different constellations through the telescope. You're most interested in the two statues in the garden: Sagittarius (the arrow dude) and Aquarius (the jug babe). Set the lever to the third symbol (Aquarius) and look inside the telescope to see the star color. Set it to the fourth symbol (Sagittarius) and look inside again. (In case you're color-blind, Aquarius is light blue, and Sagittarius is green.)

Return to the garden and examine the statues. Press the green button on Sagittarius and the light blue button on Aquarius. When both buttons have been pushed, the fountain floods the spiked pit behind Door 2 with water, causing the chest to float to the surface. Return to Door 2 and open the chest to find a pistol. Return to Door 4 (after another encounter with Richter) and use the pistol to shoot through the glass.

DISC 3 WALKTHROUGH: You automatically climb to the top of the castle and enter a long hallway. The doors behind you are locked, which leaves you no alternative but to walk straight ahead. You encounter Richter's ghostly noggin for the last time (yeah!) and come to a stop in the middle of the hallway. Continue forward and examine the dead end to find the fourth glowing bug. Walk back to the middle of the hallway, turn right, and walk "into" the wall to reveal a hidden room.

Inside the room is a goofy device with two wheels, two levers, and a button. The wheels spin when you press the button, but the number of notches they spin in either direction is determined by the levers. Each lever has three settings: up, middle, and down. The object is to get the red dot on the left wheel to appear through the round hole on the right wheel. For an easy solution, use the Up/Down setting once, then the Down/Down setting until the wheels line up.

The device slides back to reveal a hidden stairway. Press ○ to examine the painting at the top of the stairs. You're now in a room with Richter, who's about to undergo a nasty transformation. After he's done talking, you have two choices. Use the gun to shoot him for the good ending, or walk toward him for the bad ending. The good ending has a longer animation sequence, pictures of D's programmers, and a rocking soundtrack as the credits roll. You're also shown how many of the four glowing bugs you found. If you find all four bugs, you get an extra screen at the very end, along with a sound effect that's a clue about the major plot twist in the upcoming sequel.

NBA ShootOut

ALL-STARS ARENA: At the Exhibition screen, press: R1, R1, R2, R2, L1, L2, L1, L2.

WWF WrestleMania:

DOUBLE DAMAGE: Pause the game and press ×, □, ○, △, ×. The screen flashes red. Unpause the game and your attacks do twice their normal damage. Neato.

Descent

CHEAT CODES: Enter one of the following codes during the game, quickly and without pausing. A soothing female voice says "Cheater!" and the name of the cheat (complete with over-excited exclamation point) appears when you enter it correctly.

ALL KEYS!: □, ×, ○, △, ×, △, △, ×, △, ×, △, ×. You now have all the keys for the current level.

FULL LEVEL ACCESS GRANTED: △, □, □, △, ○, ○, □, □, △, ○, □, □. Start a new game and you can access any one of Descent's 30 levels, including the 27 regular and 3 secret ones.

INVULNERABILITY!: □, △, ○, □, □, △, ○, ○, □, △, □, ×. You canna be hurt, Cap'n. Enter this code again to toggle it off.

MEGA-WOWIE-ZOWIE! (GOOD): △, □, ○, ×, △, □, ×, △, □, ×, ○, □. You automatically obtain every possible weapon and a full ammo supply for each.

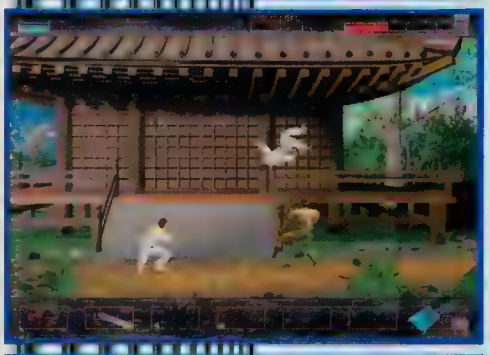
MEGA-WOWIE-ZOWIE! (GREAT): △, ×, □, □, △, ○, ○, □, △, □, ○, ×. All the benefits of the first MWZ code, but you also get ten extra lives and full level access.

TURBO MODE!: □, △, ○, □, ○, ×, □, ×, ○, △, □, ×. You fly really, really fast. Like, really. Enter this code again to turn it off.

PO'ed:

LEVEL SELECT: At the Main Menu, press L1+L2+R1+R2+↑. Press ○ to start a new game. At the Difficulty Menu, press L1+L2+R1+R2+↓. Press ○ for Easy, × for Medium or △ for Hard difficulty. Use the D-Pad to highlight the level and press ○×□△ to start the level.

Send all code submissions to:
EXECUTE
Dimension Publishing
1175 Chess Drive, Suite E
Foster City, CA 94404
or email us at: d5@quake.net



TIME COMMANDO

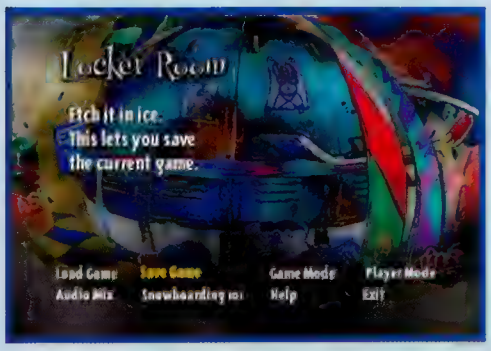
ACTIVISION • AVAILABLE SUMMER

Activision, together with European developer Adeline Software, is currently readying a new 3D action/adventure, for release this Summer, titled: "Time Commando". Although you might not be familiar with Adeline Software, you've probably played one of their games at one time or another, as they are the force behind such titles as, Alone in the Dark and Relentless: Little Big Adventure. Time Commando promises to bring many new features to the PlayStation front and is one of the first real-time games ever to utilize a roving camera, providing a third-person, over-the-shoulder perspective. In addition, Adeline has developed a new proprietary engine technology that seamlessly integrates real-time 3D characters in pre-rendered, animated backgrounds. This will allow players to instantaneously alter their character's movements in mid-animation. In Time Commando, you take on the role of a futuristic computer repairman, who has been sucked into a computer-generated time warp by a powerful virus. You will have to defeat over 80 historical foes and master 50 seperate types of weapons, while attempting to safely return to the present. As of our press date, Time Commando is scheduled for an early Summer release. We will have more on this interesting title in an upcoming issue.

SHREDFEST

EA • AVAILABLE JUNE

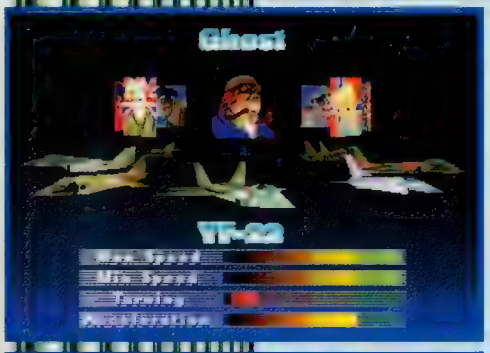
EA Studios has been hard at work (or play, depending on how you look at it) putting the finishing touches on "Shredfest", a fast-paced, downhill snowboarding adventure that definitely borrows more than a touch of influence from the 32bit versions of Road Rash. In fact, not only is Shredfest similar in presentation, with plenty of video cut-scenes and CD music from alternative rock bands, but most of the cool and kooky characters, who have been appearing in the Road Rash series, have been brought over for a little winter R&R — shred-style. In the game, players start as a "local" and can't move up in the ranks (and location) until enough prize money has been won to move on to higher competition. Of course racing will be a big part of the game, but stunts will share an equal importance. Although we can't comment on the gameplay at this stage, we are told that the developers have put a lot of care and effort into conveying the physics and actions of real snowboarding while, still keeping that addictive arcade feel. Shredfest is set to ship this June and we will have a complete follow-up review in an upcoming issue.

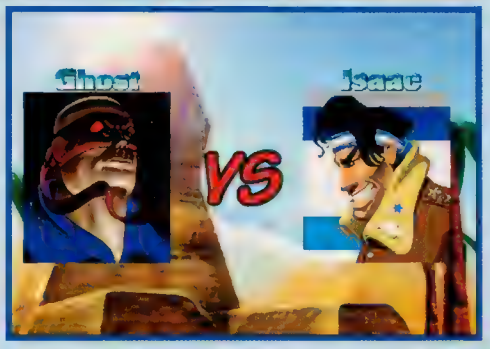


DEADLY SKIES

JVC • AVAILABLE 3RD QUARTER

JVC has a couple of goodies set for release this upcoming third quarter. The first, Impact Racing, was previewed way back in our Dec. issue #2 and has come quite along way since then. The second, "Mission: Deadly Skies", is an arcade-style flight/combat shooter with a unique twist. The basis of Deadly Skies is a one-on-one aerial dogfight game, where you strap yourself into a variety of lethal jets and take to the skies, battling it out for the best two-out-of-three matches with eight other ruthless enemy fighter pilots — kind of like Street Fighter II, but in jets. In addition to the standard heat seekers and 20mm cannons, each fighter has his or her own set of special moves that are pulled off by various directional pad combinations. Some of these moves include: loops, rolls, speed bursts, multi-missiles, devil spins and more. The graphics are what we've come to expect on the PlayStation — 3D and texture mapped — with beautiful computer generated backgrounds. The gameplay, even at this early state, is quite fun and addicting. Played either against the computer or head-to-head with a friend, Mission Deadly Skies could shape up to be the next Top Dog.



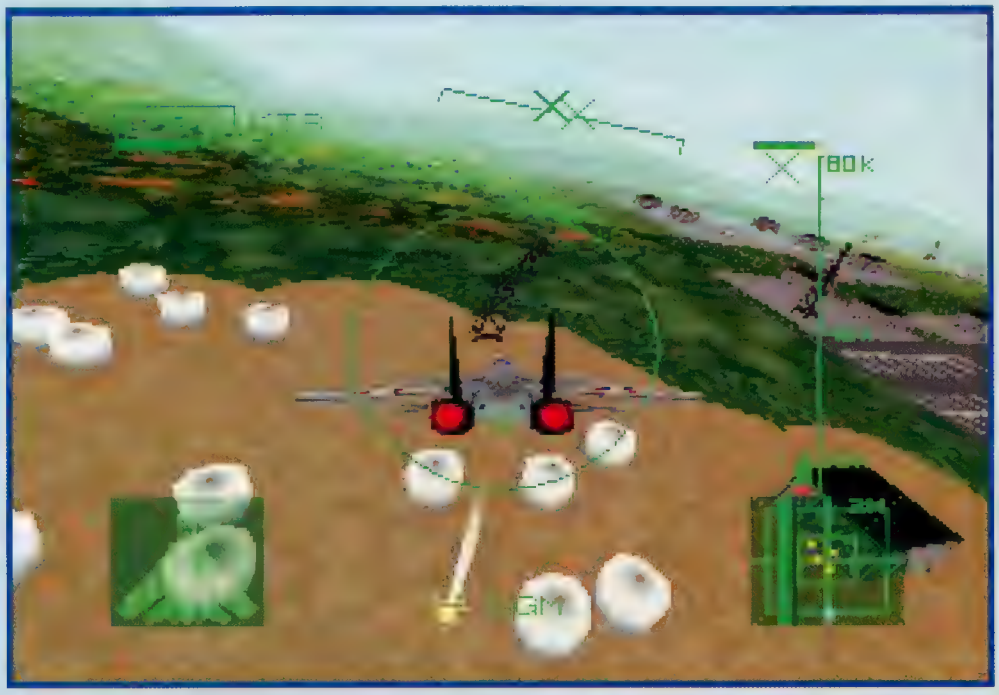


EXPECTING

TOP GUN

SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE • AVAILABLE JULY

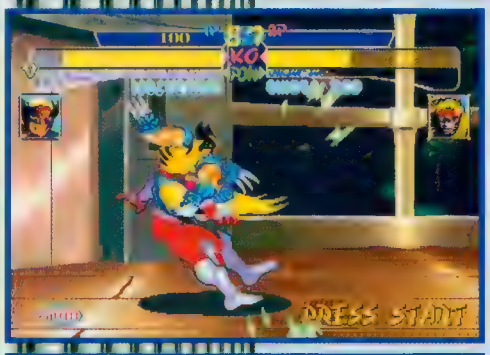
Maverick is back! This time for the PlayStation (I thought Tailhook got rid of all of those guys?) "Top Gun: Fire At Will" is due out shortly from Spectrum HoloByte for both the PlayStation and the PC. Based on the mega-hit Paramount movie, gamers assume the role of "Maverick", starting the game at the Navy's fighter weapon school in Mirarmar, CA. Once you've completed your schooling, you then dogfight your way around the world (a la Thunderstrike 2) in an epic adventure that will lead to true fame and fortune (hey, it worked for Tom Cruise). I remember having loads of fun playing the original game on the NES, years ago, and we should be in for a treat this time as well. Top Gun features extensive use of FMV and features the actor James Tolkan, who appeared as "Hondo" in the movie and plays a similar role in the game. Co-starring in the game is Julie Carmen (of "In the Mouth of Madness" fame) who appears as a veteran foreign correspondent. At first look, I have to say that Top Gun: Fire At Will looks like an ace, if the gameplay holds up, we should all be doing "some of that pilot $#%@" pretty soon.

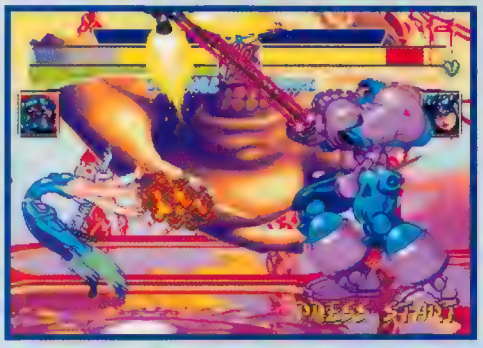


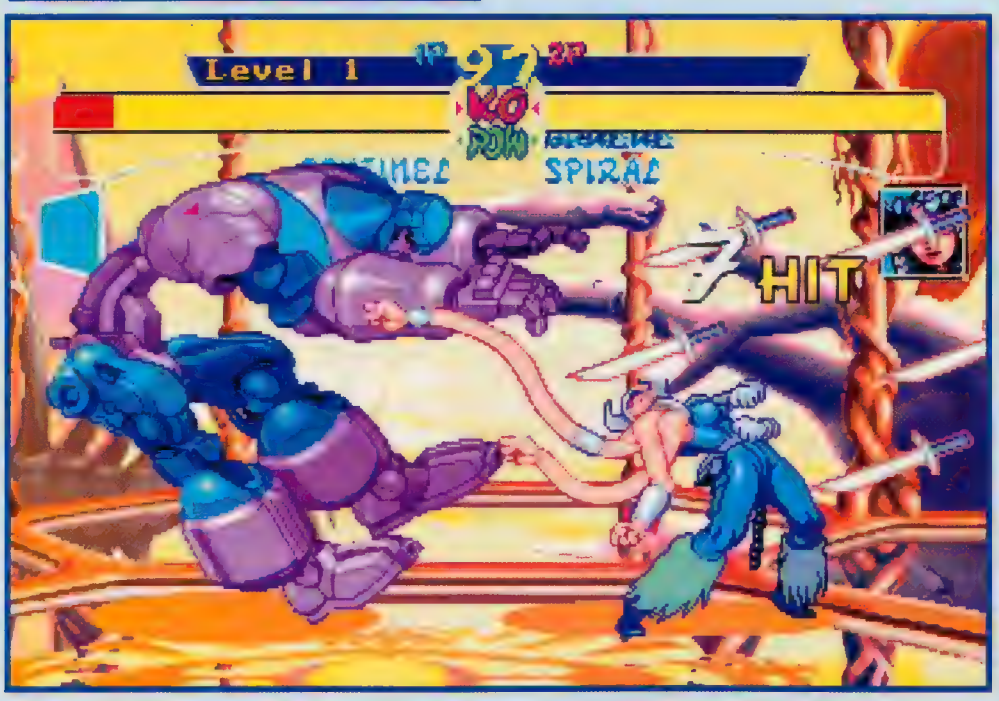
X-MEN

ACCLAIM • AVAILABLE MAY

"X-Men: Children of the Atom", the popular one-on-one arcade fighter by Capcom, is making its way to the PlayStation early this Summer, courtesy of Acclaim. Sporting gigantic sprites, huge, vertical and horizontal, multi-level backgrounds, multiple combos, mid air fighting and throws, auto-blocking and juggling, super moves and the pinpoint control and playability we've come to expect from the masters of the fighting genre, X-Men could shape up to be a major console hit. If you're not familiar with the game, it plays and looks much like Capcom's other current fighters (i.e. Street Fighter Alpha and Darkstalkers) but, of course, with Marvel's number one selling comic book characters. Although the Saturn version is about to be released to retail, we expect the PlayStation version will be released a little bit behind it and should show up sometime early this Summer. Hopefully, this means it will have all of the frames of animation included that were mysteriously missing in the Saturn version. We'll keep you posted on its progress and should have a follow-up review some time in the next few issues.







EX-RATING

F1 RACING

PSYGNOSIS • AVAILABLE JULY

Well, it was a matter of time before we saw a "true" Formula 1 racing game for the PlayStation and what better developers to deliver it to market than Psygnosis, who seem to have the whole "3D thing" down to a science. Not only will "F1 World Championship" be a visually fast-paced, three-dimensional, texture-mapped feast for the eyes, it will be jam-packed with the most absolute details pertaining to F1 Racing. Expect to see every single Grand Prix circuit reproduced down to the foliage on the sides of the track (finally, Monaco as it should be), as well as every team and every driver from the 1995 season. Add to that, Murray Walker who is to F1 Racing in Europe as John Madden is to Football here in America, accurately modeled F1 cars using the actual diagrams and physics as their real-life counterparts, both simulation and arcade modes and amazing artificial intelligence, and you've got the trappings for an incredible racing title. Psygnosis is planning on debuting F1 World Championship at the upcoming E3 show this May and will have it ready for a retail release in July. We'll definitely be keeping an eye on the progression of this game, as should you.

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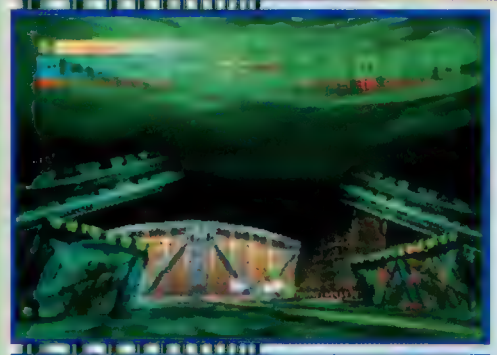

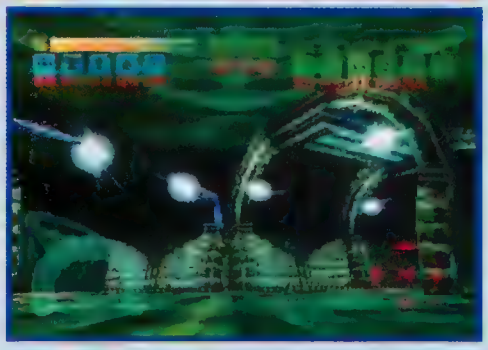

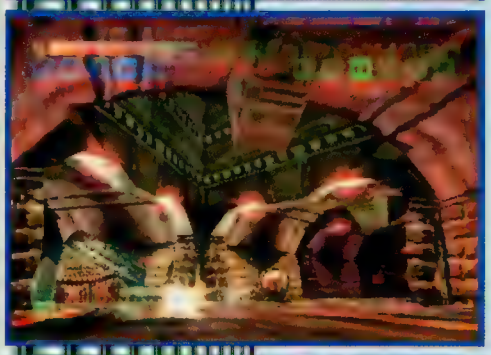

TUNNEL B1

OCEAN • AVAILABLE SUMMER

Ocean has granted us a first glimpse of two very cool and amazing games that are slated to show up later this Summer. The first, "Tunnel B1", which is shown on this page, is a post-apocalyptic combat/racing game where the player uses a powerful vehicle that can move on different kinds of terrain including water. Although we don't have much information on the game at this point in time, the video tape that Ocean was good enough to give us absolutely blew us away! It is very hard to contain our enthusiasm for this game, even though we haven't had a chance to play it yet. The 3D environment looks like it was projected straight out of an SGI Onyx, with high resolution, detailed texture-maps and a sense of volume and space that is breathtaking. Likewise, "Viper" (we'll have screen shots of this one next month - displaying the video tape would not do the game justice), a futuristic helicopter combat game, takes place in a very "Blade Runner" looking world where you have the ability to dive from high in the sky, down through the concrete canyons of the city, to the streets below. Look for a lot more information on these impressive new titles as we can get our hands on it.

EXPECTING

TRIPLE PLAY

EA SPORTS • AVAILABLE JUNE

EA Sports looks to have a very strong baseball title on their hands in "Triple Play 97", coming to retail in late June. As featured two issues back in EX*News*, Triple Play will be the first EA Sports produced baseball title to offer a Major League Baseball license, in addition to the MLBPA license that they have made use of in previous games, on other platforms. Triple Play will include all 28 major league stadiums, rendered in true 3D via EA's "Virtual Stadium" technology, offer 8 player simultaneous gameplay, a link option for the ultimate in 2 player sports gaming, 3 different batting and fielding views, full season play, the ability to draft, trade and create players and motion-captured animation. Our only comment on the product, at this point in time, is why '97? Is July the end of EA's fiscal year? Is the '96 season going to be wiped out by another players' strike? Enquiring minds want to know! All "humor" aside, look for an editorial evaluation of the product in our July issue.

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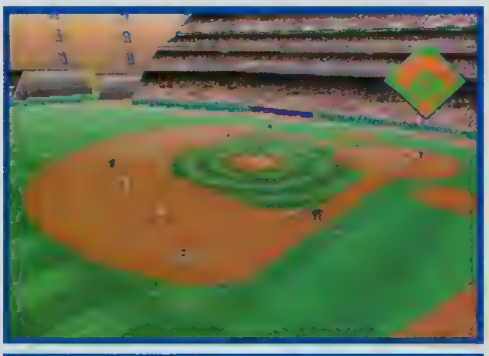
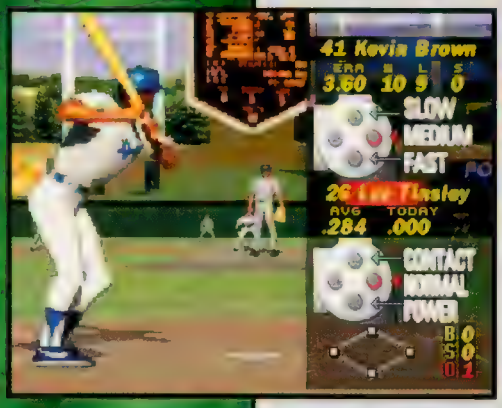
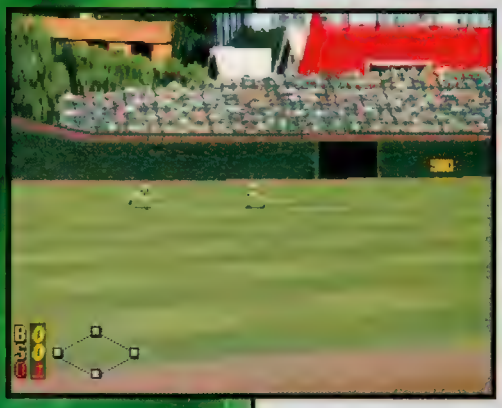


THE MAKING OF

MLB PENNANT RACE

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY SONY



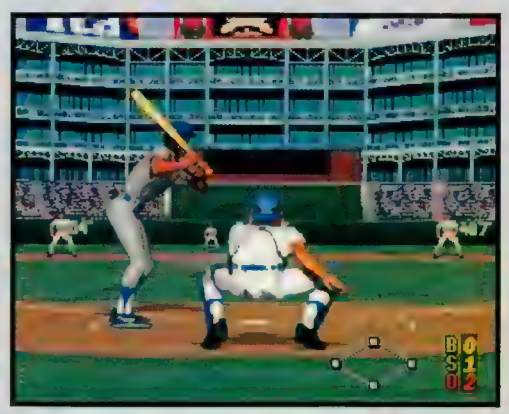


I first caught a glimpse of MLB Pennant Race while on a press tour of Sony's San Diego development operation last September. The development team, led by Executive Producer John Smedley (he also produced Sony's NHL Face Off), was already embroiled in getting its 3D stadiums up and running and establishing a basic pitcher/batter interface.

There would be many months of work ahead for the team of programmers, artists, designers and baseball freaks assigned the task of making Pennant Race a reality in the spring of 1996. At that point in time, their attention was further directed toward accomplishing those tedious tasks that would pay big dividends down the road: motion-capturing hitting, pitching and fielding action and then developing realistic human skeletons and movement from the data, mapping, in three dimensions, all of the ballpark data for Major League Baseball's 28 stadiums,

developing physical models for ball movement, compiling statistical databases and beginning work on assembling artwork and historical statistics for over 700 players from Major League Baseball's Player's Association.

This was just the beginning. As development moved forward, they were confronted with the daunting task of trying

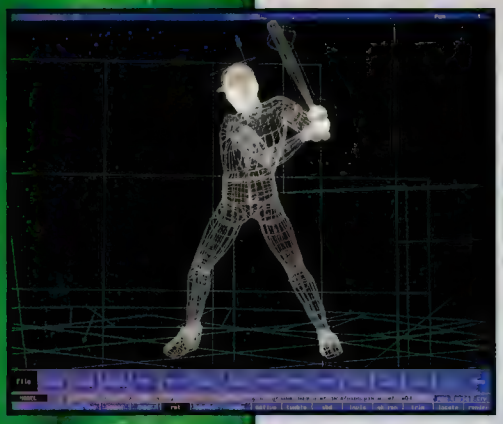


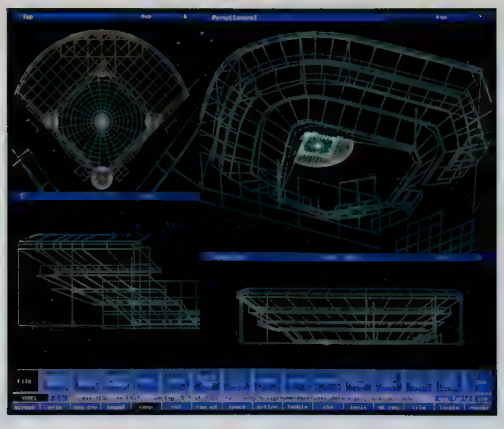
EXTREME

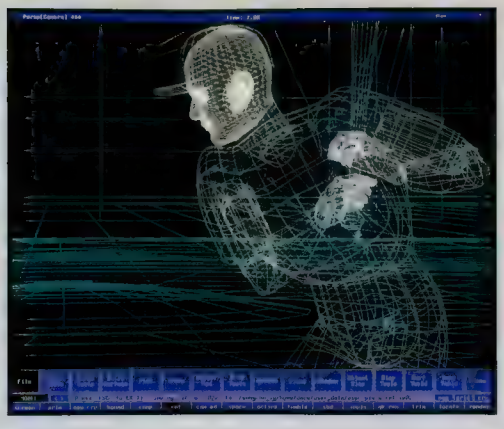
to make the most realistic game of baseball yet to appear on a video game system and to do it in about a year. Issues such as camera placement, pitcher/batter play mechanics, one-player options vs. the two player game, the nature of season play and statistical tracking became the day-to-day nature of the job - everyone in the team accomplishing their individual goals while focusing on the big picture of making milestones, deadlines and ship dates - and hopefully producing a game that will be considered best of category!

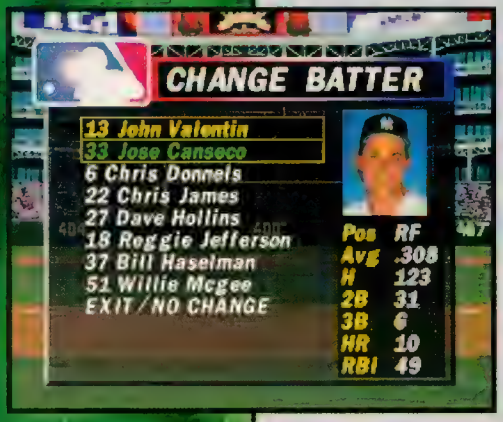
Now, with about a month before final code is due for production, the team is, in what is commonly referred to as, "crunch mode". The team is working six to seven day weeks and 16-18 hour days for the next six weeks. Play testers are working feverishly trying to catch "bugs" in the software code and submitting their feedback so that gameplay can be "tweaked" and the various structural areas of the project are coming together for the first time. For example, the sound engine, which to this point in time has existed on its own, has been designed to stream high quality samples directly from the CD. The team believes that this approach will yield the best possible voice reproduction while allowing for different words and phrases to be strung together to create play-by-play with proper phrasing, timing and annunciation. The real test, however, lies in what happens when this system is running at the same time as the real-time gameplay. With roughly 60 days left in the design schedule, the team has finally begun to see the fruits of its labor. The pieces are coming together to produce the first playable version of the game - the one you see spread before you now.

Mr. Smedley had the following to offer regarding the marathon schedule that now will become the design team's daily routine: "The next 60 days will be spent without families, without wives, without girlfriends, without sleep and without food." (editor's note: Well, maybe not food. I know, for a fact, that the San Diego operation has an account with Godfather's Pizza.) He continued, "This last phase in the design process is where all of the individual pieces of the puzzle come together. After months of doing all of the background work, we are focusing on nothing but gameplay, finalizing graphics and testing, testing, testing! This is winning time





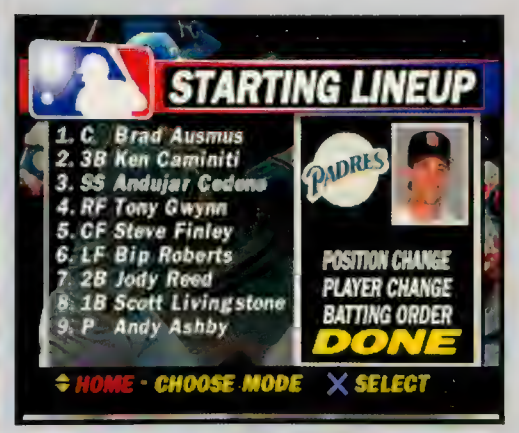


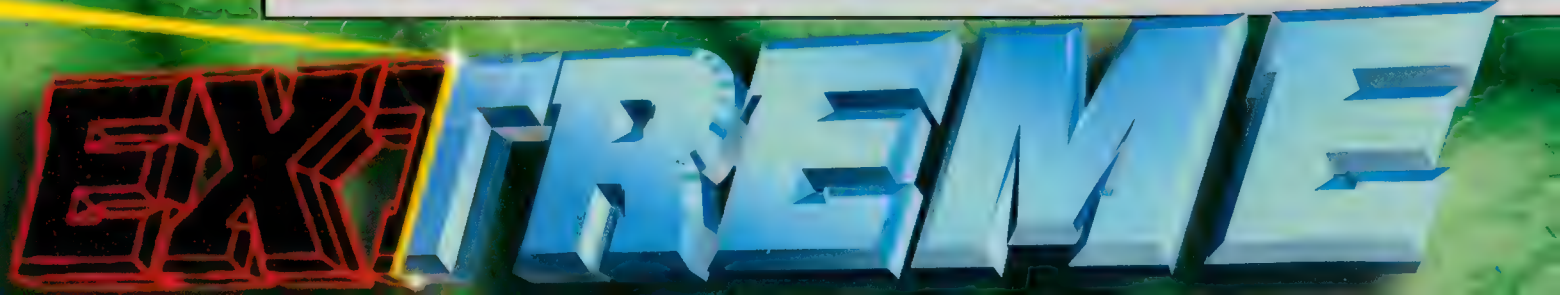


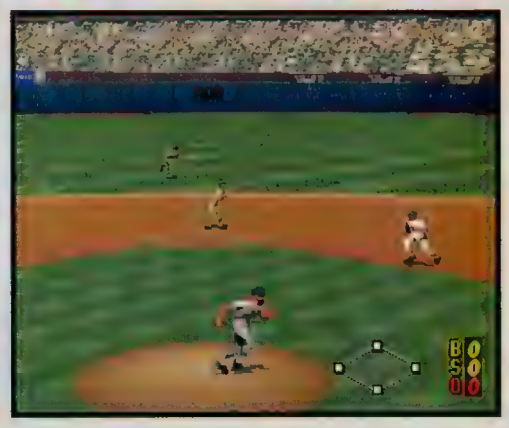
and this period is where we take a good game idea and have the chance to make it great."

On the marketing side, life is equally busy with advertising campaigns being implemented, the PR machine cranking up to deliver the good word to all of the gaming (often referred to as "enthusiast" by the marketing types) publications and more mainstream media outlets. Their task is simple: take what the producer believes is an "A" quality title and turn it into word-of-mouth, hype, buzz and, ultimately, unit sales. With nationwide sales of GameDay now topping the 300,000 mark, the location of the bar is something that those involved in this side of the project are made well aware - and not just for baseball, but also looking toward the end of this year.

"Our job (in product marketing) is essentially to take the product and make sure that the consumer and the media have the chance to see the game as we see it." said Craig D. Ostrander, Product Manager. He continued: "A key feature in MLB Pennant Race is the way we've executed the Arcade and Simulation modes.







In simulation mode, the game player has every option at his finger tips while, in Arcade Mode, there are minimal options, with no pitching or hitting interface screens. This facilitates a quick, arcade style game. We're basically trying to offer the sports gamer the best of both worlds."

"We believe that what will differentiate MLB Pennant Race from the competition is that we know how to make a great game. We have two of the PlayStation's biggest hits in GameDay and Face Off and we plan to continue this success with Pennant Race. We'll have detailed graphics superior to any baseball game on the market and the great gameplay inherent in both the football and hockey titles. I hope game players are ready to step up to the plate because MLB Pennant Race is for serious sports gamers only!"

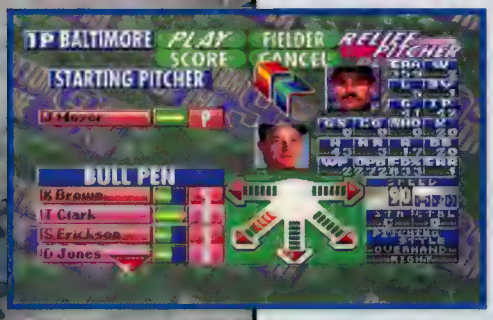
"A key component of the PlayStation launch strategy was to offer a line of ground breaking first party sports titles," added Peter Dille, SCEA Marketing Director. "The sports category is critical to any platform and we believe that this has been a key ingredient in our success to date. But, we're certainly not complacent. With the completion of NBA Shootout and MLB Pennant Race, we will be turning our attention to beginning sequels for the four core sports titles, as well as broadening our sports product offerings into other sports. We'll have some great new, second generation products out this fall, while many other publishers are still working on getting their first sports titles to market and introducing new sports titles to the mix."

Has the dedicated crew in San Diego succeeded? While time will most certainly tell, I can't help but be impressed with what I've seen and played so far. The sheer number of features and the quality of the 3D environment should go a long way in helping Sony San Diego achieve their goal of market superiority in the category. In less than a year, Sony's San Diego operation has gone from a well kept secret to the hottest sports development house in the country. The baseball crew, however, know that life is perilous at the top of the mountain and, with nine different baseball games scheduled for release on the PlayStation in 1996, including titles from EA Sports, Crystal Dynamics, Virgin, VR Sports, Konami and Accolade, the competition is going to be severe. Are they ready for it? We'll let you know next month when we review the final version of the game.

Dave

BOTTOM OF THE 9TH

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY KONAMI



As I stated in this month's editorial, we mistakenly reviewed a 50% version of Konami's "Bottom of the 9th" in our last issue. This time out, however, we've got the right disk and we are ready to roll. Let's step up to the plate and take a look at the PlayStation's newest baseball title.

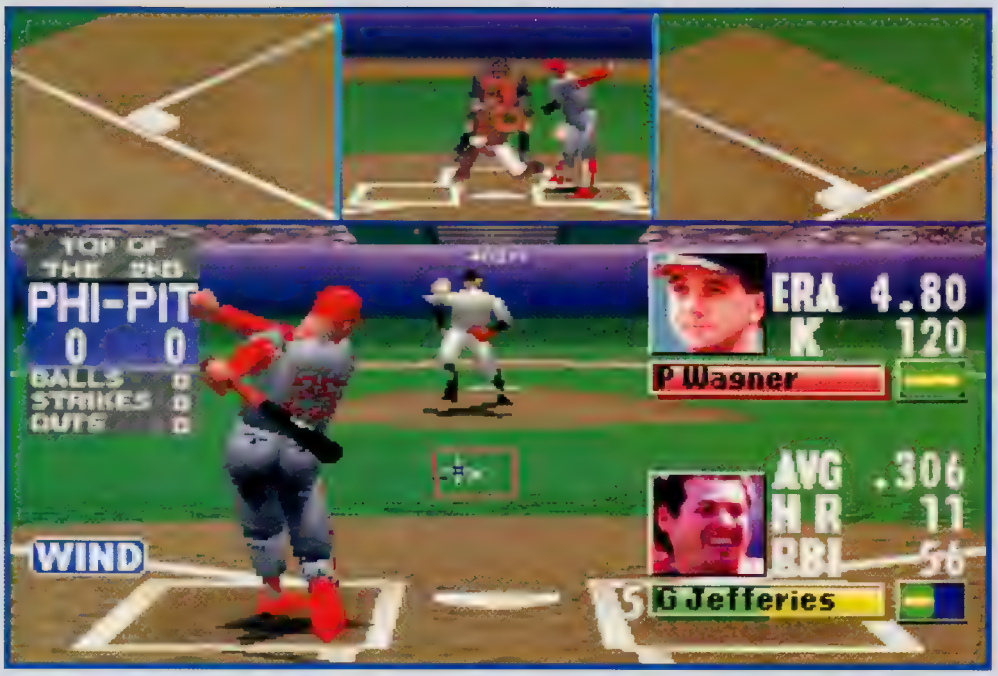
Bottom of the 9th is an interesting mix of arcade and simulation action, hosting a grab bag of features. The game features an MLBPA license (which is put to great use with the inclusion of every player's number on the back of his jersey) and full season play with statistical tracking, including League Leaders and team-by-team player statistics (although, for some reason, player batting averages are not included in the team mix). The game does not have an MLB license, therefore teams are simply listed by city. In addition, the game features 8 different fantasy ballparks, toggles for manual or computer controlled fielding, running, manager, hitting etc., managerial toggles that include defensive positioning, a Training Camp that allows the player to hone his batting, pitching and base running skills and a General Manager option that allows for trading of players.

The feature that really jumps out at you in B9, however, is the incredibly accurate play control. The game plays like a dream and the polygon animation does not have that tell-tale "lag" that seems to plague other games making use of this animation technique. It is sooo easy to throw to the correct base, position the runner and make plays in the outfield ... and very intuitive. Gameplay is accomplished in a real-time 3D world with a split-screen pitcher/batter interface. However, it is in this area that the game loses some of its luster.

The gameplay environment is, in fact, true 3D but there are no camera angle options. The game forces you to see the field in much the same way that a 16-bit game would - in an isometric perspective, with the twist that it scales in and out. It's not that the game isn't playable from this vantage point - it is. But, I expected more viewing options and more of an on-the-field perspective. In fact, the game goes so far as to tease you with the possibilities between innings - when the announcer sums up the results, the camera starts free-wheeling and gives some cool looks at the stadium.

My second issue is with the default batting mechanics. Although you can set batting to "Lock-on" where you are only

EX RATED



shorten this curve, heed these words: "aim for the flashing star".) In terms of long-term play value, this will result in much more realistic scoring; but, if you're looking to easily park some, go for "Lock-on".

Lastly, I can't finish this review without mentioning the game's "play-by-play" announcer. While occasionally mistaking a lazy fly ball for a line drive, the voice is outstanding and easily keeps up with the action. The announcer tells you what you need to know (including each player's name as he steps up to the plate) without ever getting in the way of the action.

In conclusion, Konami has delivered a quality baseball product to PlayStation sports fans that has great play mechanics. The addition of a few camera angles, an MLB license and the real stadiums would have Bottom of the 9th sharing the rarefied air with other PS*EXTREME* Gold titles. As it is, the game's attention to detail in player animation and in player control go a long way toward making B9 an experience that baseball fans won't want to miss.

Dave

required to time your swing, the default is set to a World Series Baseball (Genesis) icon system. While this is my all-time favorite way to hit, you are going to find the learning curve for this system to be extended. (If you want to

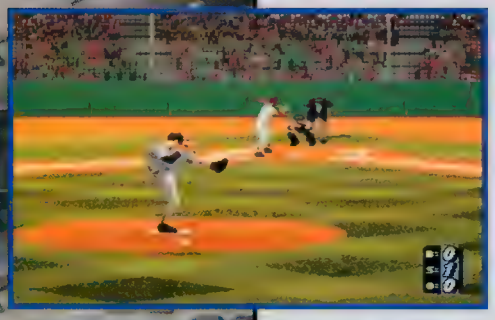
THE BOTTOM LINE

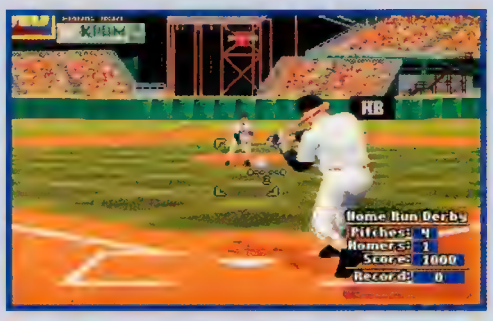
87%

Konami has delivered a quality baseball product to PlayStation sports fans that has great play mechanics. The addition of a few camera angles, an MLB license and the real stadiums would have Bottom of the 9th sharing the rarefied air with other PS*EXTREME* Gold titles. As it is, the game's attention to detail in player animation and in player control go a long way toward making B9 an experience that baseball fans won't want to miss.

HARDBALL 5

PUBLISHED BY ACCOLADE - DEVELOPED BY MINDSPAN





Well, it's late March here in Foster City, CA, the sun is starting to shine and you can just get a whiff of the freshly cut grass over at Candlestick, OOPS, I mean 3Com park. You know what that means don't you? You guessed it, it's baseball season and your PlayStation has just finished spring training. In this issue alone, we will be reviewing three new baseball titles currently available for the PlayStation. The subject matter for this review is Accolades venerable Hardball series. The latest being Rocky, wait a minute, I mean Hardball 5. Originally released for the PC late in 1995, Hardball 5 is a baseball sim lovers dream, and is scheduled for a spring release.

For the most part, HB 5 is a direct port from the PC version, with a few minor enhancements. For those of you not familiar with this series (I can't believe there are that many), Hardball dates back to the Commodore 64 and has been progressively updated ever since. The bulk of the titles success has been with the PC versions, mainly due to the fact that Hardball is a true simulation game and not really an "arcade classic". I must admit, when it comes to baseball sims, I like mine simple. My biggest complaint with the PC versions is that they were just to complicated to play (check out the 98 page players guide that accompanies HB 5 for the PC). However, being the eternal optimist that I am, I was eagerly awaiting the PlayStation version, hoping that Accolade would take advantage of the PlayStation's awesome capabilities.

So, what do we get with the PlayStation version? I am happy to say that I'm very pleased with what I've seen so far. First off, everything that was positive about the PC version is in the PS version, like the full season statistical tracking, 12 gorgeous old-time

EXRATED

In addition, the players are much easier to control and it's much easier to hit the ball (this is always a good thing). Graphically, Hardball 5 is as good as it gets. Every time I boot up this game I feel like I just walked into the park (it sort of also makes me want to order a hot dog and a beer). The only thing really hampering Hardball 5 is the pace of the games and the emphasis on simulation play. Here I think Accolade went for a little too much realism. If you're hungering for a little baseball action, you better have some time on your hands, because it will take a while to get through the game.

So, where does that leave us? The bottom line is that Hardball 5 is a solid performer in every category. I love listening to Al Michaels calling the play by play. For simulation fans, you've got more than enough to keep you busy, and arcade fans won't be disapointed in this latest version either. A true triple crown candidate; let's play ball!

Alex

stadiums (40 stadiums in all), free agent signing, replays, trades, whatever you want, it's pretty much in there. However, we still have no Major League Baseball license, and no 3D camera. I guess you can't have everything.

THE BOTTOM LINE_

So, where does that leave us? The bottom line is that Hardball 5 is a solid performer in every category. I love listening to Al Michaels calling the play by play. For simulation fans, you've got more than enough to keep you busy, and arcade fans won't be disapointed in this latest version either. A true triple crown candidate; let's play ball!

NBA SHOOTOUT

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY SONY

There is no question in my mind that Sony's NBA Shootout is the best looking sports game I have yet to play. The developers in Sony's European operation have delivered a real-time 3D engine, making use of the PlayStation's high-resolution mode, that is truly revolutionary. For you simulation fans out there, take heed that NBA Shootout is arcade action first, with some simulation overtones (more about that later). Let's take a look under the hood.

NBA Shootout presents the player with a fast-paced, graphically detailed game of arcade basketball. The gameplay emphasis seems to have been placed on making the player see open lanes and in focusing on the passing game and moving the ball around. In fact, some of the best fun to be had, in NBA Shootout, is in the two man (wing-post) passing game. It is critical that you find the open man. The computer AI is VERY active in making charging calls. The game has been designed so that (as opposed to Konami's "In the Zone") one-on-one moves to the hoop, in the set offense, are very difficult to execute.

Although I found this a little frustrating at first, I soon found the beauty in this concept. Passing in to the post, working around screens, playing high-low and keeping the defender on your hip, are all strategies that are rewarded in this game, as they are in the real thing. The best part of the game has got to be the passing mechanism. The designers have created a system where the player you will pass to is based on rotating the active player until he is looking at that player. (It sounds like this might slow down gameplay but, in practice, it is quick and seamless.) In addition, the game supports Sony's Multi-Tap, allowing: up to 8 human players to play simultaneously, substitutions, offensive and defensive play calling and allows for the trading of players. Over time, these play features are what give Shootout its excellent long-term play value.

Graphically, and in the play-by-play commentary departments, Shootout is brilliant and without peer (one look at these shots should be enough to convince you of that statement). The courts are beautifully rendered, with highlights, reflections and a three-dimensional crowd. The polygon players move fluidly and have detailed team jerseys, including player numbers. There are six different camera angles that you can toggle between, both in the pause menu and in the instant replay feature (seven, including the manual camera - only workable in the instant replay feature). While they look great, some of these views put you too far away from the action and some have trouble keeping up. After about thir-

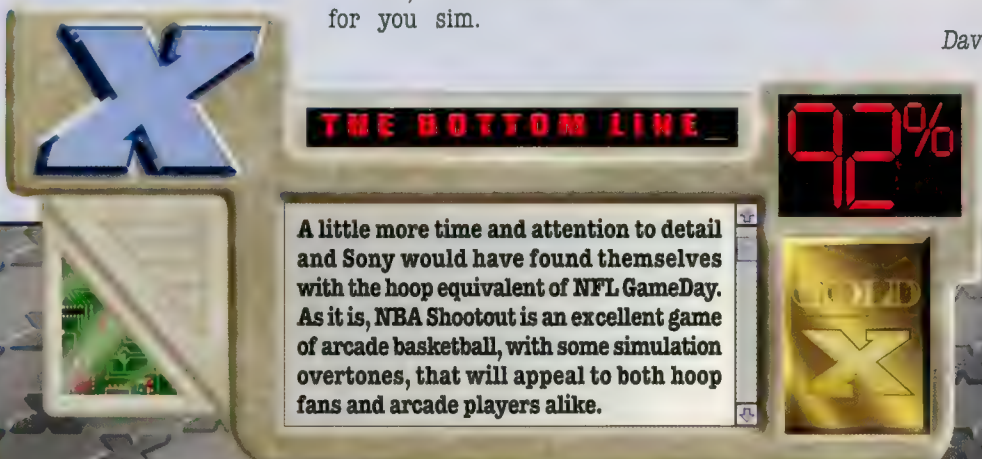
EX RATED

ty hours of play, I have decided that the default (One Player) camera is the best for both one and two player games and the Action Camera is good for playing a close-up game (although some of the passing angles are not in view).

OK, now for you sim. fans out there, here's what's missing or odd (in no particular order): no season statistics, no league leaders, player statistics not available during the game, only at the end of play, way too many steals (on "Veteran" level, I've had as many as 43 steals in a game), the "wrong" players on the computer team score most of the points (as an example, the Magic are consistently lead in scoring by Jon Koncak, while Penny Hardaway can go many a game with donut), the defense has no choice but to line its point guard (!) in the low blocks on foul shots (with the big man placed right next to the shooter), players like Steve Kerr and John Stockton can do 360's (they must have coughed up the dough for some of those air shoes that are "guaranteed" to improve your vertical), as soon as your players leave their feet, they also lose all ability to move laterally, defensive players switch and double too much (centers are routinely playing out of position and finding themselves on the wing), there are no referees (you have to chase the ball down yourself), no fade-away jumpers, centers are an active part of the back court press, the score is only displayed after a made basket and, finally, blocked shots almost always go out of bounds.

With all of this being said, I prefer NBA Shootout to both Konami & EA's game and enjoy going back to the title in season mode (even sans statistics). The gameplay is more realistic, more exciting and much more challenging and the play environment is drop-dead gorgeous. A little more time and attention to detail and Sony would have found themselves with the hoop equivalent of NFL GameDay. As it is, NBA Shootout is an excellent game of arcade basketball, with some simulation overtones, that will appeal to both hoop fans and arcade players alike.

Dave


THE BOTTOM LINE
92%
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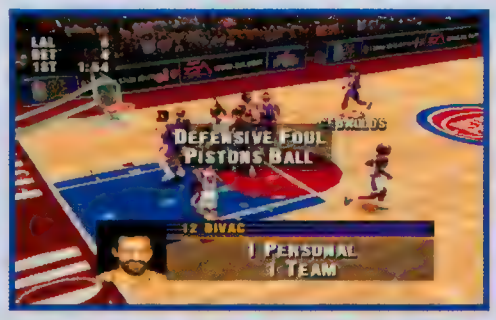
GOLD

NBA LIVE 96

PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS - DEVELOPED BY EA CANADA



This has been one of the toughest reviews to write since I've been in the business. There is so much in EA Sports' NBA Live 96 that it should be a slam dunk ... best hoop game ever. But, ultimately, I came away from my extended time playing the game with the feeling that, even with all of its features, the game isn't as much fun as the 16-bit versions, nor as technologically advanced as competing PlayStation hoop product.

Just a theory: it seems to me that EA Canada (the developer of the game) is suffering somewhat by producing PlayStation titles that are ports of PC games. This is in direct contrast to the approach taken by Sony's San Diego development arm, where titles like NFL GameDay, NHL Face Off, NBA

Shootout and MLB Pennant Race (the latter two are featured in this issue) are destined to be PS native. And the results of these different philosophical approaches are as apparent as the differences between Shootout and Live 96.

While, in terms of options (full season play, team, player and league leader statistics, multiple human players, trading, the inclusion of Shaq, on-the-fly play calling and all of that type of stuff), there is nothing missing in Live 96 (in fact, none of the PlayStation hoop titles to date can compete with the sheer number of features found in this game), there are some fundamental problems with the graphic environment and the player animation that affect gameplay and make the game something less than what it appears to be.

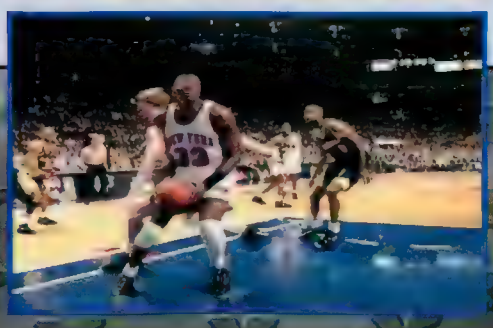
First of all, the player animation is very rough and not a major improvement over the 16-bit games. It is sprite-based and the players seem to take jump shots with both hands, get very "pixelated" at times, the edges around the characters are rough and you just don't get that "32-bit" feel that you get when looking at the polygon players featured in both Sony and Konami's games. In addition, the Virtual Stadium technology, while very pretty in the demo. mode, causes some

EX RATED

much "bunching" of the players. This, in particular, can cause some confusion when you have the players' names below the active player (this feature can be toggled between name, number and position). It can become very difficult to determine which player(s) is/are active. Also, the "End 1" and "End 2" cameras rotate after a change of possession. This results in a momentary loss of visual contact with the action and can be a little disorienting, as you make the switch from offense to defense (it also results in a camera that seem to gets stuck as it rotates along the baseline). Overall, The "Press" cameras and Classic 3 are the most playable views, but I confess to enjoying the close-ups in "End 2". Lastly, and most importantly, the effects of the 3D environment have not been kind to gameplay. Players scoot and slide entirely too much and shot blocking, which was the hallmark of the original 16-bit title, has all but disappeared as a result of this loss of control. When playing the game, I keep getting the feeling that, while it may have worked on PC, there is something missing in the play control and my guess is that it is a direct result of the port. After playing those games mentioned earlier, with their spot-on control, it becomes that much more apparent that Live is lacking something.

It's too bad. There is so much in NBA Live 96 that it seems like I should enjoy the game more than I do. On paper, it was the hoop game to beat this year but we don't play on paper ... do we? In the end, features don't tell the story, gameplay does. And that's where NBA Live 96 falls short of the competition.

Dave



gameplay problems. There are fifteen different camera angles available during gameplay but some of them, like the "Sky" and "Sideline" cameras, are not really playable views — you are either too far removed from the court or there is too

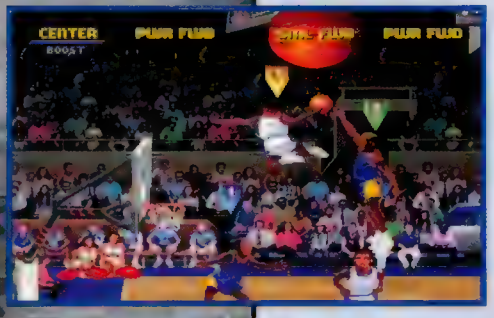
THE BOTTOM LINE_

84%

It's too bad. There is so much in NBA Live 96 that it seems like I should enjoy the game more than I do. On paper, it was the hoop game to beat this year but we don't play on paper ... do we? In the end, features don't tell the story, gameplay does. And that's where NBA Live 96 falls short of the competition.

COLLEGE SLAM

PUBLISHED BY ACCLAIM - DEVELOPED BY IGUANA



Well, here we are in March, football season is over (the Raiders disappointed me again), baseball season is not quite ready to come out of it's winter hibernation and the pro basketball season is still too young to be exciting. What's a poor game freak to do? Hold on, I did say March didn't I? That can only mean one thing ... March Madness Baby. And, just in time for this spring phenomena, Acclaim is introducing College Slam, the "college" version of their ultra successful NBA Jam. Tip off is just seconds away, so what say we suit up and hit the hardwood!

At first glance, College Slam bears a striking resemblance to NBA Jam (imagine that). You have your choice of 44 different college teams; although, much to my publisher brothers' chagrin, Texas Tech is not one of them. There are three different modes of play, with up to sixteen players entering in tournament mode. And, as always, you've got your whirlwind dunks and mind numbing alley oops! In addition, you'll be treated to authentic college fight songs when the momentum shifts your way. The rest of the "basics" are pretty much the same as the NBA version, which is not to say a bad thing, just not a new thing. If you liked the previous two titles, you'll certainly like this one. If you think you have just heard somebody yawn, you're right ... it was me.

So, outside the "college" theme, what's the point you ask? Good question. I've been playing this game all morning, trying to figure that one out. There seems to be so much more you can do with the college theme rather than just dust off the old game and add a couple of new twists. Choosing between 44 college teams is nice, but how about choosing from 44 of the greatest college teams of all time. THAT would be cool! Needless to say, I think the point is to put another prod-

EX RATED

uct on the shelf that won't rock the boat, yet has a built in audience to insure enough sales to make it a worthwhile project. That may be a safe bet for the publisher, but as a consumer it sucks.

Lets face it, these games aren't cheap; needless duplication is a waste of time and money. Don't get me wrong, College Slam is a solid title, it's just that we've been here before.

So, where does that leave us? The bottom line is that College Slam is an entertaining arcade style basketball game. It's unfortunate, however, that it differs only slightly from its older siblings. I must admit, I had fun playing this game, and the school related commentary is quite amusing; it's just that, as we mentioned when we reviewed the Tournament Edition of NBA Jam, you get the "been there, done that" feeling from start to finish. Lets face it, the development team at Iguana has put just about every thing they can into this series and unless they're going to do a high school version, this should be it. The question is, is it worth sixty bucks? If you don't have either of the two earlier versions, then maybe. However, if you do, either rent it or scam it, but don't buy it; there are other, more original games worth your money.

Alex

THE BOTTOM LINE

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NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB

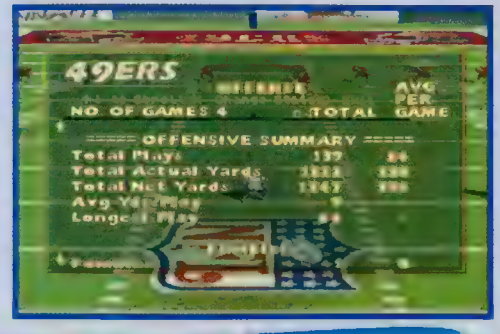
PUBLISHED BY ACCLAIM - DEVELOPED BY IGUANA

If Sony's NFL GameDay had not redefined my expectations of interactive sports, I may have found Acclaim's NFL Quarterback Club 96 to be a more rewarding experience. But it has and, because of this, I found the game to be good ... but not great.

It is definitely not for lack of effort on Iguana's part (the developer of the game). There are more graphical and gameplay options than we have room to mention. A short list includes: user control over audibles, player substitutions, a "Smart 'D'" option that allows for one step defensive play calling, weather, the speed of the clock, over 20 different camera angles

(Action Cam is the most consistently playable of the bunch), player energy, fierceness of tackling and more, NFL and NFLPA licenses, full season team and player statistical tracking in almost every imaginable category, a no huddle offense that allows for quicker gameplay, 8 player simultaneous play, a historical simulation mode (where you can play-out 50 of the NFL's greatest moments (sans the actual players at the time the scenario occurred), instant replay, a post-game wrap-up show and tons more.

Graphically, the game does an excellent job of depicting real-time, 3D action on the field. Although, and I don't know why this is, I get the feeling that I am playing in outer space or something - this is possibly a result of the way the players cast shadows and the effect of the lighting on the field of play. The player animation is good, with little "pixelization" (with the notable exception of the Shoulder Cam), although, it's not as clean or as detailed as that found in GameDay. The player control, although a drastic improvement over the Saturn version of QB Club 96 (where it seemed as



EX RATED

though you were playing in an ice rink), is not as tight.

My one BIG problem with the game, however, is the nature of the season stat's tracking. It is very frustrating when you see a solid product and an omission this big occurs. The stat's that are saved during the season are for team categories — no player stat's, no league leaders. This amazes me, because the design team has saved just about every team stat imaginable, including third and fourth down performance and percentage of plays to the left and the right side of the field! Suffice to say that, as far as the game's database is concerned, the design team shanked it wide right. Also, the way the computer adjusts to your play calling is on the weak side. On All-Pro level, you can call the same play (Pro-Form/Long/Young Gun for those of you keeping score) over and over again and move down the field — not that the computer won't give you a good game ... it will. However, it will level the playing field by creating turnovers and dropped passes, not by reacting to play calling tendencies.

In closing, I will admit to, after being submitted to the torture of the Saturn version of QB Club 96, being very skeptical about the qualities of this game. But, I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the PlayStation version. The more I played it, the more I found to like. NFL QB Club 96 has solid arcade gameplay, good graphics and animation and more options than I have yet to experience in a video football game. It's not NFL GameDay, but what is?

Dave

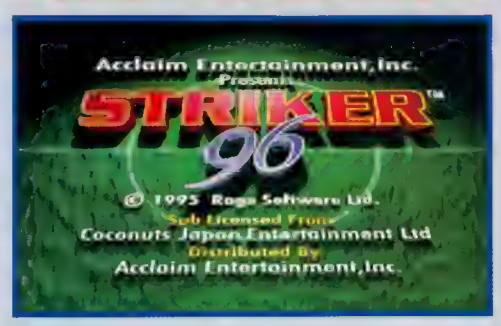
THE BOTTOM LINE

82%

In closing, I will admit to, after being submitted to the torture of the Saturn version of QB Club 96, being very skeptical about the qualities of this game. But, I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the PlayStation version. The more I played it, the more I found to like. NFL QB Club 96 has solid arcade gameplay, good graphics and animation and more options than I have yet to experience in a video football game. It's not NFL GameDay, but what is?

STRIKER 96

PUBLISHED BY ACCLAIM - DEVELOPED BY RAGE



My name is Zach and I am a soccer-holic, and I couldn't be bloody happier. The PlayStation's been out less than a year and the software library already has two football games, one tennis game, one hockey game, two baseball games — and THREE soccer games. Which means that Striker 96, the fourth entry into the footie-sim sweepstakes, already has some brutal competition in the form of FIFA 96, VR Soccer and Goal Storm. Actually, I only consider Goal Storm to be competition because, while FIFA 96 and VR Soccer are slow-paced, strategic affairs, Goal Storm and Strike 96 are hyperactive kick-fests with limited options and arcade-style action.

Ah yes, options. After a cheesy intro sequence, you're presented with four game types: Friendly (a single game), Trophy (a World Cup-style tourney), Tournament (a single-elimination tourney), League (two to eight teams competing against each other) and Quickstart, which jumps you directly into a game. You can also choose between "arcade" or "simulation" modes, although the only diff is that "simulation" has a few more control options. Most of the modes support up to four players, if you've got the Multi-Tap. There are 38 national teams from which to choose, each of them stocked with 11 starters and five substitutes, ranked in six skill categories. The game even plays each team's national anthem during the pre-game ceremony (which, blessedly, you can skip with a single button-mash).

So how does Striker 96 play? Unfortunately, it's too dang fast. No matter what formation and strategy you've chosen—there are nine of each—your players seem to randomly run around the field, rarely in position to receive a pass or intercept someone driving towards their goal. Playing against a PlayStation-controlled team is roughly as fun as being beaten about the head with a dead fish, since it passes the ball with pinpoint accuracy and blinding speed. Goal Storm at least moves slowly enough to allow SOME

EXRATED

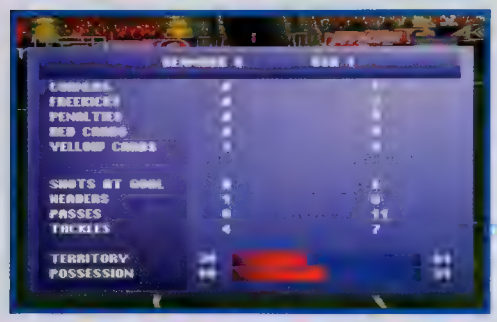
ing I stuck upon it). First is the "indoor soccer" mode, which is six-on-six soccer in an enclosed arena; I found myself playing this more than the outdoor mode, just 'cause it's such a nice change of pace. Second is the strength meter that pops up on the screen when you make a pass or take a shot, similar to the power gauges in golf games. The meter gives you more precise pass control than almost any other soccer game I've played. (Now if only the damn players would stand still to receive your spiffy passes.)

Graphically, Striker 96 is the weakest of any PS soccer game. The full-motion-video clips are an odd mix of sharp computer-generated graphics and live-action soccer footage that looks like it was taken from a very well-used VHS tape. The in-game graphics are more 16-bit than 32-bit, with weakly animated players and several unusually similar viewpoints of the action (except for the side view).

The so-so sound effects are, uh, "highlighted" by a very drunk-sounding Scottish-brogued commentator who barks out one of his roughly 20 sound bites when a player takes a nasty tackle or scores a goal. (You can turn him off when the brogue gets annoying.) There's no music during the game, and mediocre tunage during the menu screens.

As an action-oriented soccer game, Striker 96 comes in second only to Goal Storm, but that's because there are only two action-oriented soccer games for the PlayStation. And, as my evil high-school gym teacher used to say when he wasn't busy trying to spy into the girls' locker room (no lie): "Second place is the first loser!" Strictly average.

Zach



strategy to develop; in Striker 96, both teams just boot the ball back and forth in a psychotic game of hot potato.

Striker 96 does have a couple of neat gameplay features worth mentioning(and worth the Bronze X rat-

THE BOTTOM LINE

74%

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SLAM 'N' JAM '96

PUBLISHED BY CRYSTAL DYNAMICS - DEVELOPED BY LEFT FIELD PRODUCTIONS

Crystal Dynamics has thrown their hat into the PlayStation hoops ring with "Slam & Jam '96, starring Magic & Kareem. This game, which originally appeared last year on 3DO, was one of the best-selling 3DO titles in '95 and one of my personal favorites. Let's take a look at what distinguishes this title from its competition.

While Slam & Jam '96 does not sport an NBA License, this has not slowed Left Field Productions, the game's development team, in any perceivable way. Slam & Jam '96 features 29 pro teams, based on the cities they are located in, with full 82 game season play as an option. In addition, the game features complete statistical tracking for the season (leaders in 7 offensive and defensive categories), the ability to play as a "Franchise Player" (where you assume the role of that player for the season and can call for the ball during gameplay), full substitution and roster management of the 12 fictional players featured on each team, on-the-fly instant replay, a speed/power meter that is new to the PlayStation game, team 30, the All-Stars that feature the Magic Man and the Cap', play-by-play by Van Earl Wright ("Twoooo minutes ... two minutes to play.")

What I loved about the 3DO game, and continue to enjoy with the PlayStation version, is the in-your-face arcade gameplay. There is not another game on the market that allows for the dramatic dunks, blocked shots, mid-air passes and alley-oops that S&J offers. And the best part about it is that you always feel like the outcome is under your control. What really makes the PlayStation version of the game, however, is the ability to assume the roles of Magic and/or Kareem in the Franchise Player Mode. I mean, Magic is mister triple-double. I find myself playing just to see how I can spread the ball around, hit the baby hook and make those mad charges toward the hoop. And the character animation LOOKS like the Magic man (and Kareem

EX RATED

to Konami's "Run & Gun" arcade game and the player animation is a little rough, when compared to titles like NBA Shootout but ... it works! And the play-by-play is amusing while managing to add to the excitement of gameplay — something that isn't exactly commonplace in the sports gaming world. The gameplay is, first and foremost, arcade action; but the title offers all of the little simulation features that can lure the most hardened hoop scholar to play S&J again and again.

In summary, Slam & Jam '96 simply plays like a fiend and that is, ultimately, what you are paying for with your hard earned cash. Sure, I would have loved to play with the full NBA license and been able to do the franchise thing with Pippen, Stockton, et. al., or to check out my dunks from a number of different perspectives. But, the truth of the matter is that none of the current crop of PlayStation basketball games does everything and Slam & Jam '96 belongs at the top of the heap, right along side Shootout. It may not have the NBA license but "I love this game!"

Dave

for that matter ... including the spec's). I also recommend that you play 4 minute quarters in the Franchise mode; that will give you the most realistic statistical game.

Graphically, the game offers only one camera angle, very similar

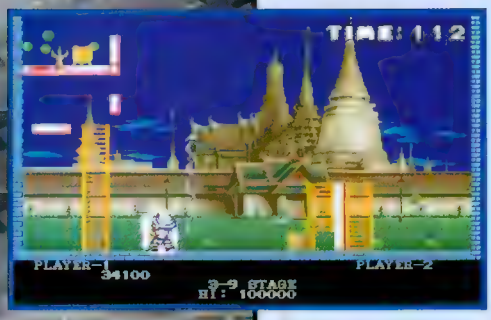
THE BOTTOM LINE

... the truth of the matter is that none of the current crop of PlayStation basketball games does everything and Slam & Jam '96 belongs at the top of the heap, right along side Shootout. It may not have the NBA license but "I love this game!"

91%

BUSTER BROS COLLECTION

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY CAPCOM



Retro-gaming is becoming a genre unto itself and it ain't no surprise — video games have been around for 20 years, more than enough time to build up a nostalgia and mythology all their own. Plus, it doesn't hurt that today's home game systems can effortlessly emulate '70s and '80s gaming technology. Capcom's Buster Bros. Collection is the third compilation of aging electronic enjoyment for the PlayStation and it features a trilogy of games (only the first of which was released in the U.S.): Buster Bros., Super Buster Bros., and Buster Buddies.

The original Buster Bros. (released in 1989) follows the adventures of two harpoon-wielding heroes who travel around the globe through 18 different locations, popping balloons along the way. (Geez, how cliched.) Three or four rounds are played at each location — each round is at a different time of day, for a little visual spice.

At the start of each round, several giant balloons start bouncing around the screen, which usually has a few platforms and ladders. You — and in the two-player simultaneous mode, your buddy — shoot your harpoons into the air to burst the balloons. Each giant balloon splits into two smaller ones, which then split into two even SMALLER ones which can be popped out of existence. The smaller balloons bounce lower on the screen, making your job more dangerous — brush up against a balloon and you go bye-bye. There's also a time limit for each round: if you don't get all the balloons before the clock hits zero, you start over again with one less life.

Some balloons and platforms drop additional weapons when you shoot 'em, such as the double harpoons (which let you have two harpoons on the screen at once) and the Vulcan Gun (which can't destroy platforms, but shoots at a freakish rate of speed). Your keen new weapons are balanced out by strange creatures that crawl onto the screen and disable your weapons for a few seconds, if you bump into them.

Super Buster Bros. (released in 1990), has almost identical gameplay to the original, adding a few more modes: Panic Mode (high-speed play), Tour Mode (similar to the globetrotting of the first game), and Story Mode (where you become a jewel thief).

Buster Buddies, released in Japan only last year, has three more gameplay extras. You can now choose to play with one of four characters, each of whom carries a differ-

EX RATED

graphics are colorful, but functional — the backgrounds are merely still pictures and the balloons are simply large multicolored spheres. The first two games use geographic locations as backgrounds, but Buster Buddies uses works of art (such as the Mona Lisa) and whatever bizarre ideas were running through the game artists' minds. Buster Buddies also differs from the first two games by using 3D-rendered characters instead of hand-drawn ones, making 'em look a tad like rejects from Donkey Kong Country.

The sound effects in all three games are okay, although Buster Buddies has a truly strange feature: a heavily accented man celebrates the end of each round by screaming "Awesome!", "Incredible!", or one of several phrases that neither myself nor all three of my friends could make out. The music is okay, but should've been better; Buster Bros. needs adrenalin-pumping guitar rock or techno tracks, not bouncy synthesizer pop. I ended up turning down the game and cranking up the KISS, since the sound effects aren't important to the gameplay, and since I'm always looking for a reason to upset my neighbors with 3 A.M. gaming sessions.

Buster Bros. Collection is simple, addictive fun — no three-dimensional whiz-bang visuals, no 20-minute-long full-motion-video scenes, just three flawlessly programmed conversions with rock-solid gameplay. Now join me in praying that the rumored collection of Capcom arcade classics is for real. (A pixel-perfect PlayStation version of Strider? Someone get me a drool cup!)

Zach

ent weapon. There's a Training Mode for getting in extra practice. Finally, there are new "bomb" balloons that drop from the top of the screen and destroy any nearby balloons when you shoot them.

The B.B. Collection's

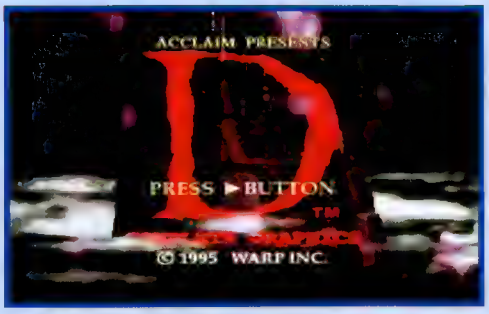
THE BOTTOM LINE

80%

Buster Bros. Collection is simple, addictive fun — no three-dimensional whiz-bang visuals, no 20-minute-long full-motion-video scenes, just three flawlessly programmed conversions with rock-solid gameplay. Now join me in praying that the rumored collection of Capcom arcade classics is for real. (A pixel-perfect PlayStation version of Strider? Someone get me a drool cup!)

D

PUBLISHED BY ACCLAIM - DEVELOPED BY WARP



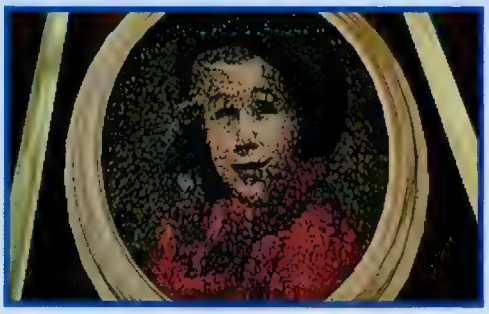
Richter Harris, the director of a major Los Angeles hospital, has taken a walk on the postal side, shooting everyone in sight and holing up inside the building. Harris' daughter, Laura, is summoned to talk some sense into her Pop, but as she enters the hospital, it suddenly transforms into an ancient castle. (Don't you hate it when what happens?) Now Laura has to solve a series of puzzles, confront her father, and find out why this game was given a title that looks like a typo.

Originally released last year for the 3DO — is it safe to declare it a dead system yet? — D is an "interactive horror" game, putting you in Laura's fashionable-yet-functional flats as you explore the castle, stumbling into the occasional scary scene or puzzle. The scary scenes usually involve Laura stumbling into a very dead person or persons, or nearly getting killed herself (although Laura can't die until the very end of the game).

D takes place in real-time, meaning that you only have two hours to go from start to finish, and you can't save the game. But you'll still blow through the game in a night, for two reasons. First, there's a "hint" function in the form of Laura's compact, which you can look into three times for not-so-subtle hints. Second, most of D's dozen or so puzzles are hillbilly-simple. No red herrings, no multiple paths — just grab an item here and use an item there.

D's sharp-as-a-Ginsu-knife computer-rendered graphics are presented in the widescreen format to create a movie-like feel (and probably also to improve the video quality). On the 3DO, the graphics were a little TOO dark, but they've been lightened up on the PlayStation, making the gross-outs easier to see. A minor irritation is that Laura is a very sluggish young woman,

EX RATED



taking a good five seconds every time she walks slightly forward or turns ninety degrees; after a while, you wish that Laura would chug some Jolt Cola and get her butt in gear. As for the music, it's usually at a tension-spiking low volume, but swells to a bladder-shaking roar in the gross-out scenes.

Whatever spooky mood the graphics and music create is squished into a gooey pulp on the half-dozen or so occasions when Richter's "phantom head" pops up to ward off Laura; the voice acting is quite simply the worst I've endured in any PS game (and, since this was originally developed with Japanese speech, not remotely synched to Richter's lips). The final scene, which reveals exactly what the D stands for, starts out dramatically and turns into a laugh riot as the overacting overloads the Suck-O-Meter.

D has a few chills and thrills, but the puzzles are much too easy and the adventure is much too short — ridiculous for a game spread across three CDs. As a $4 rental, it's worth the moolah; but, as a $50 purchase, it most certainly ain't. If you want an epic puzzle game, buy the puzzle- and challenge-stuffed Myst; if you want "interactive horror," buy the superb Resident Evil.

Zach

THE BOTTOM LINE

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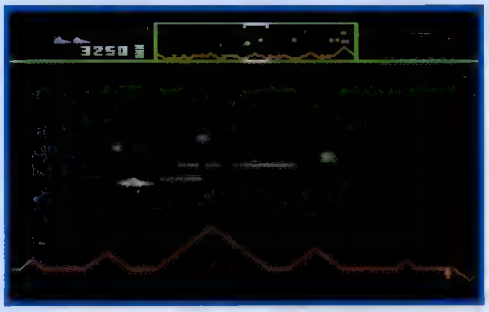
WILLIAMS ARCADE CLASSICS

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS - DEVELOPED BY DIGITAL ECLIPSE



After giving Sony one of the necessary pieces of its hardware launch puzzle last fall, in the form of the Mega arcade hit, "Mortal Kombat 3", Williams Entertainment has turned their attention to their long, illustrious arcade history and cranked out a classic arcade collection; "Williams Arcade Classics."

For those of you that are too young to ever have owned a pair of elephant bells or a lava lamp, Williams is bringing to the PlayStation a collection of some of the most influential arcade games from the first and second generation of gaming. These titles include: "Defender" and "Defender 2" (formerly known as Stargate), "Joust", "Robotron", "Sinistar"

and "Bubbles." These titles are not merely conversions of the original titles, but emulated arcade games — the exact, line-for-line code, sounds and sights that were inherent to the original arcade boards. (In issue #4, we wrongly reported that it was an emulated 6502 cpu. It is, in fact, an emulated 6509 cpu)

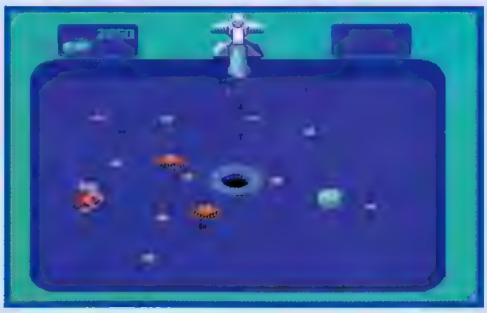
If you are new to gaming and are expecting this to be the next piece of high-tech PlayStation entertainment — forget it. These games are all about one thing ... immense playability.

The goals were simple — play for hours and do it on one quarter. There was no such thing as "beating" a game — unless you consider "flipping it" defeat. A brief description of the titles follows.

Defender and Defender 2: The goal here is to fly to your right, fly to your left and shoot the alien craft that are attempting to snatch your human comrades from the vector terrain below.

Joust: This is one of the most unique arcade games of all time. In this game, you pilot an ostrich or an emu and exit a static screen from the left and right, attempting to stay above the enemy buzzards, conk them on the head to release their eggs and scoop them up without getting conked yourself. What was really unique about Joust (and it continues to be) is that there was no "shooting" — everything was accomplished simply by maneuvering your bird.

Robotron: One of the best, most insane shooters of all time. You are playing to fight off an army of robots that threaten the last human family. This game is so addictive and challenging that Williams



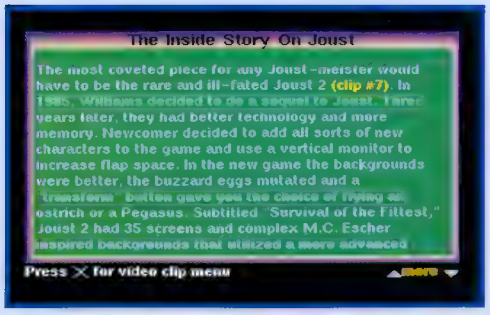
days of 96k arcade boards. In Bubbles, your challenge is to use the scrubbing bubble under your control to chase scum down the drain.

Sinistar: Finally, we have one of the first games to make use of voice synthesis. This semi-Asteroids clone sported some of the highest resolution graphics ever seen, when it was released in the arcades. It was also designed by RJ Mical, the co-designer of, among other cool stuff, the Amiga and Lynx, along with 3DO and one of its best games, Monster Manor.

Obviously, these games play and look EXACTLY like the originals. Therefore, there is no fault to be found in the games themselves. If you loved the arcade games, you will love this collection. An interesting addition to the product is the inclusion of product design histories for each of the titles, including video interviews of the various designers and programmers. My only real problem with the collection is the front-end interface. It's just plain ugly. I'm hoping that's just because the review version we received wasn't completely finished in that area.

Should you buy Williams Arcade Classics? For me, the answer is yes. I still love the incredible gameplay found in Joust and Robotron and the histories are fascinating. I imagine that, for most gamers, it will boil down to a price point issue. For those of you who fall into this category, I would suggest renting the title — you won't want to miss a chance to relive, or discover for the first time, these classic games.

Tim


The Inside Story On Joust
The most coveted piece for any Joust-meister would have to be the rare and ill-fated Joust 2 (clip #7). In 1986, Williams decided to do a sequel to Joust. Three years later, they had better technology and more memory. Newcomer decided to add all sorts of new characters to the game and use a vertical monitor to increase flap space. In the new game the backgrounds were better, the buzzard eggs mutated and a "transform" button gave you the choice of flying an ostrich or a Pegasus. Subtitled "Survival of the Fittest," Joust 2 had 35 screens and complex M.C. Escher inspired backgrounds that utilized a more advanced
Press X for video clip menu
more

has decided to bring the came into the '90's with an updated, stand-alone version of the game (see EXCLUSIVE for details).

Bubbles: Ah, a game that could only have been done in the

THE BOTTOM LINE_

89%

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MAGIC CARPET

PUBLISHED BY EA - DEVELOPED BY BULLFROG

Bullfrog, the inventors and creators of such classics as Populous and Syndicate as well as more recent PC and console titles such as Theme Park, High Octane and the upcoming Dungeon Keeper, know how to make incredibly fun, challenging and addicting games ... funny how this should segue right into the object of this review, the stellar Magic Carpet for the Sony PlayStation.

For those of you readers who don't own a PC and haven't experienced the splendorous original version of Magic Carpet, you're definitely in for a treat. The game has you stepping into the curly-toed slippers of a wizard's apprentice who has had forced upon him the tremendous task of restoring balance to a shattered world. It seems

your wizard got a little over-zealous during a mighty war and produced a huge cataclysm which caused great unbalance to the world and, consequently, unleashed all sorts of mass mayhem and evil creatures. It's your quest to restore the equilibrium by gathering the world's most powerful source — spheres of mana. Where do you get this magical resource? You get them from the remains of the foes you've befallen, of course.

What makes this game so unique, is the means by which you carry out your task: hanging ten on a flying magical carpet and casting powerful spells. The mana you produce must be claimed yours, and then automatically collected and returned to your castle (your magical "home base" if you will)

EX RATED

via hot air balloon. The more mana you collect, the stronger you, your castle and your spells become. And while all this sounds easy, it certainly isn't. This is where the folks at Bullfrog really know their stuff. Besides the non-stop 3D action of flying around and blasting your opponents with all your might, you must also apply a huge amount of thought and strategy to your game. It's not enough to just destroy everything in sight, there's plenty to worry about as well. If you leave your castle alone and idle too long, surely some monster or evil cretin will come knockin' on its doors — and not to borrow a cup of sugar, that's for sure. If you ignore the mana left behind and don't focus on collecting it, other adversaries will take it for their own; or worse, you'll run out of juice.

The 3D graphic engine in Magic Carpet has been ported faithfully from the PC to the PlayStation, coming through the process a lot better than the somewhat disappointing Hi-Octane. With the exception of reflections on the water and slight graphical break-up, the game plays and looks identical to its PC cousin; even the frame rate is comparable to a Pentium 90. The sound is also quite remarkable, adding huge amounts of atmosphere to the game. If you swoop down over a village, you can hear the busy voices of the villagers as they go about their business, if you strike the surrounding foliage with a stray lightning bolt it catches fire and crackles — details: the stuff that great games are made out of.

In the end, it's the perfect balance of thoughtful strategy, intertwined with heavy arcade action, that makes Magic Carpet such a joy to play and own. With 30-plus levels, a huge variety of spells to learn and master, easy controls, beautiful graphics and addicting gameplay, this game is definitely one to own and relish.

Greg

THE BOTTOM LINE
90%
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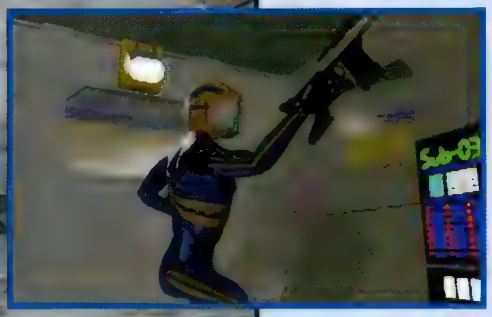
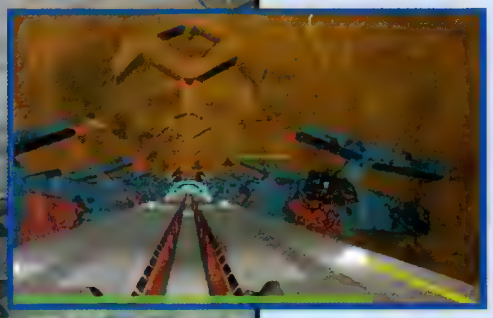
THE HIVE

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY TRIMARK





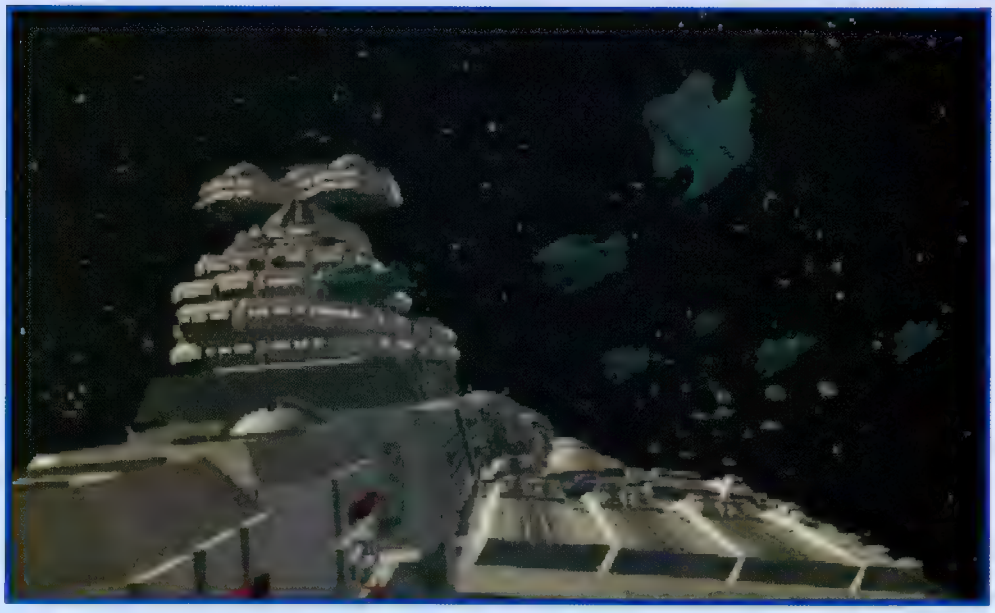
Being a sucker for a good action shoot 'em up, but somewhat intimidated by multiple CD games, it was with mixed emotions that I entered the world of Trimark's, "The Hive". After spending a considerable amount of time with "Creature Shock", my patience was wearing a little thin. However, being the fanatic that I am, I strapped myself in and booted up. Originally released for Windows 95 last December, The Hive attempts to bring you into the interactive world of mutant bees, called Hivasects ... oooooh ... sounds interesting!

If you've ever played LucasArt's Rebel Assault or Interplay's Cyberia, then you'll be pretty comfortable with The Hive, as both games share similar gameplay elements.

As the unlikely hero, you've been given the, not so easy, task of saving the galaxy from those nasty mutant bees. (Could they possibly be those nasty "killer" bees after all these years?) These Hivasects produce a toxic honey that can be used to create an extremely potent biological weapon; a weapon that a power hungry corporation, hell-bent on controlling the universe, just might want to use. What do you think?

The story is played out through a series of scenes streamed together with sharply rendered CG cinemas. Each scene becomes increasingly more difficult, while at the same time making you think you're in a "breather" level, only to, not so pleasantly, surprise you as you get into it. The game-

EXPIRATED



porate sophisticated action sequences along with "Panoractive" gameplay, which basically allows the players to rotate the playfield 360-degrees from a fixed position. If you've been playing video games for any length of time, you'll definitely understand the "cool appeal" of that.

As I mentioned earlier, multiple CD games scare me; but I must admit that I slid right into this one with little effort. For the most part, the gameplay is best described as "shoot a little bit, watch the movie and then shoot a little more". Before you know it, you're into it. I found the numerous levels to be very challenging, albeit a little repetitive, and the video, although a little chunky kept your head in the game. The only thing really hampering you in your efforts is the cursor control. It's very difficult to keep up with the pace with the standard controller; it gets very frustrating (not to mention thumb numbing) after a while, almost to the point where you just want to quit the game. The saving grace, however, is that when you do finally beat the level, you can just pop in your memory card and save your progress. Without it, the game would probably have been relegated to the Tin category. All in all, you've got a pretty acceptable action thriller/shoot 'em up (not a bad combination). The game does a decent job of keeping the action coming, while at the same time giving you a little time to catch your breath. While The Hive won't win any awards for gameplay, it's still worth checking out, even if only to listen to the games incredible soundtrack.

Alex

play, by and large, is strictly arcade quality shooting, with very light puzzle solving sprinkled in throughout, for good measure. One of the more interesting features that make The Hive different and unique is that it's the first game to incor-

THE BOTTOM LINE_

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The PS Extreme Historical Ranking Chart

Excavate is the section where we dig up the last six months or so of our old ratings and present them on one easy-to-read page, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

GOLD GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
NFL GameDay	December 1995	98%
Alien Trilogy	April 1996	97%
Resident Evil	April 1996	97%
Agile Warrior F111-X	November 1995	96%
Warhawk	December 1995	96%
NHL Faceoff	January 1996	96%
King's Field	Feb/March 1996	95%
Street Fighter Alpha	Feb/March 1996	95%
VR Golf	April 1996	95%
ESPN Extreme Games	November 1995	94%
PGA Tour '96	November 1995	94%
Jumping Flash	November 1995	94%
Assault Rigs	January 1996	94%
FIFA '96	January 1996	94%
The Need for Speed	April 1996	94%
Descent	Feb/March 1996	93.5%
Destruction Derby	November 1995	93%
Twisted Metal	December 1995	93%
Tekken	December 1995	93%
Doom	January 1996	93%
Thunderstrike 2	Feb/March 1996	93%
Road Rash	Feb/March 1996	93%
Ridge Racer	November 1995	92%
Return Fire	April 1996	92%
Defcon 5	January 1996	91%
Dark Stalkers	Feb/March 1996	91%
PO'ed	April 1996	90%
Gex	January 1996	90%

SILVER GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Battle Arena Toshinden	November 1995	89%
Air Combat	November 1995	89%
Loaded	December 1995	89%
Zero Divide	Feb/March 1996	87%
Wipeout	November 1995	86%
WWF Wrestlemania	December 1995	86%
Viewpoint	December 1995	85%
Primal Rage	Feb/March 1996	85%
Myst	April 1996	85%
NBA Jam: TE	December 1995	84%
NBA In The Zone	Feb/March 1996	84%
Off World Interceptor	December 1995	83%
In the Hunt	April 1996	82%
VR Soccer	April 1996	82%
Jupiter Strike	January 1996	82%

BRONZE GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Cyberspeed	January 1996	77%
Criticom	January 1996	77%
Total Eclipse Turbo	November 1995	76%
Mortal Kombat 3	November 1995	74%
Krazy Ivan	January 1996	74%
Theme Park	January 1996	73%
Philosoma	December 1995	72%
Zoop	January 1996	72%
Johnny Bazookatone	April 1996	72%
Cyberia	Feb/March 1996	72%

TIN GAMES	ISSUE	RATING
Space Griffon VF-9	December 1995	68%
Power Serve Tennis	November 1995	62%
Cybersled	December 1995	55%
Alien Virus	April 1996	52%
Revolution X	April 1996	33%
Novastorm	November 1995	33%

WHAT DO ALL THOSE NUMBERS MEAN?

90-99%
"Must buy" games; only the best of the best get gold. We stand behind these games.

80-89%
Great games, but lacking in some area; usually, for fans of that style of game.

70-79%
Mediocre titles that suffer from some serious flaws. Rent them before considering a purchase.

0-69%
Tin games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy these.

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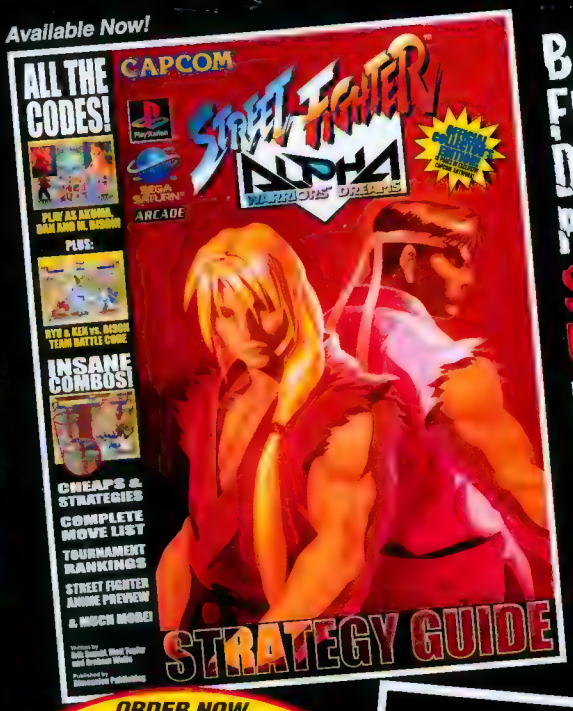

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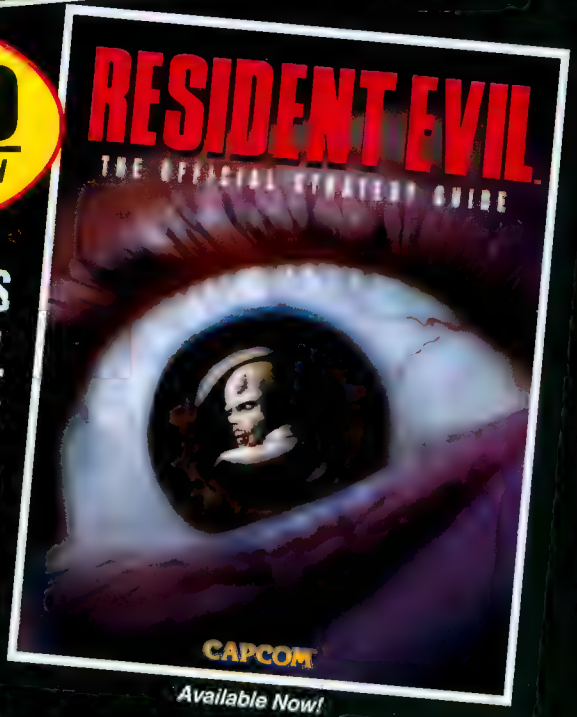

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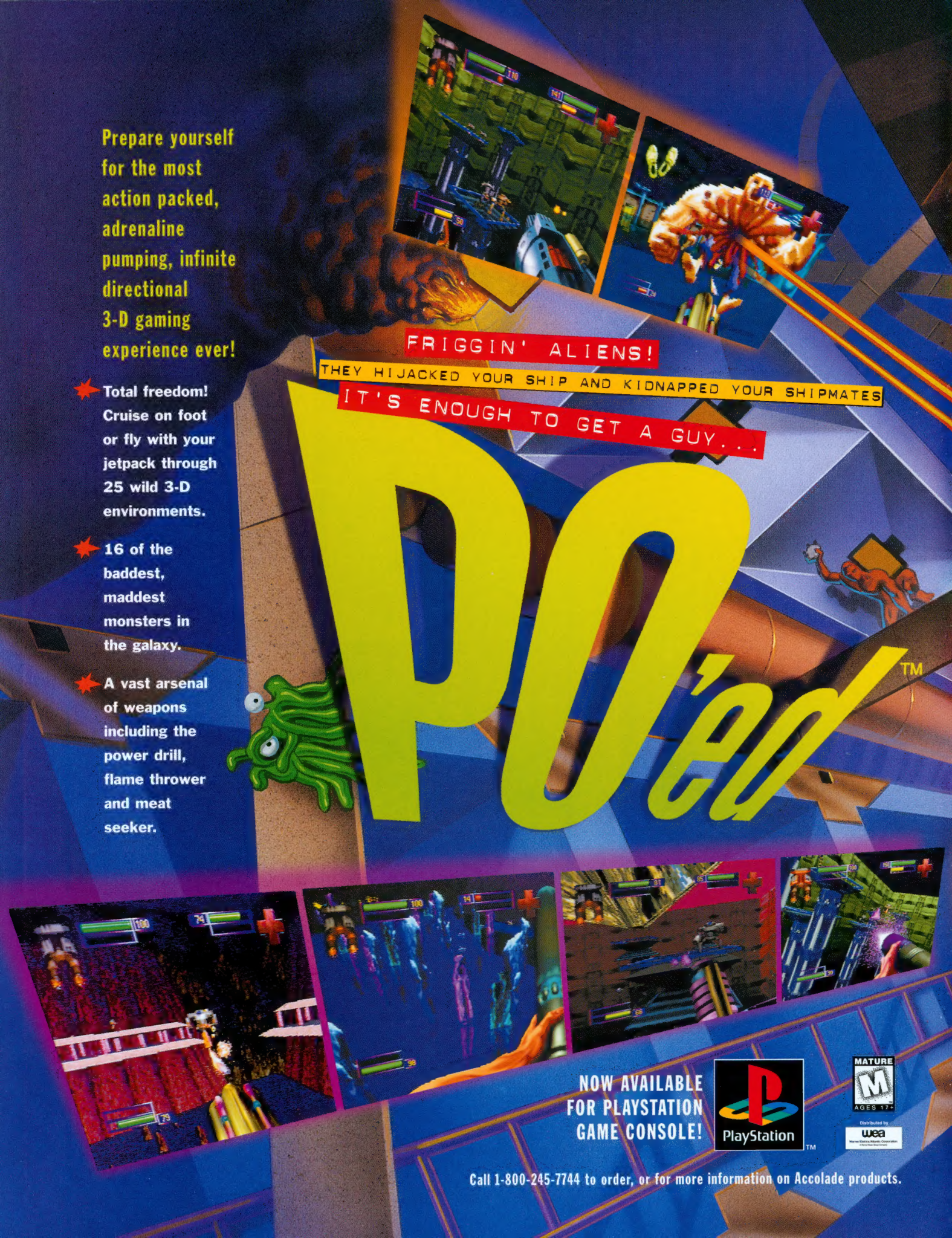
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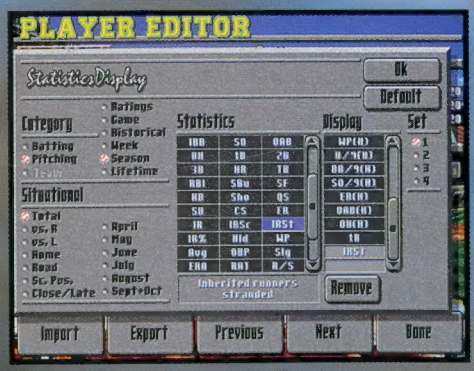

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